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NACIO
His Affairs

Books by
ELEANOR MERCEIN
(Mrs. Kelly)



BASQUERIE
BOOK OF BETTE
SPANISH HOLIDAY

NACIO
His Affairs





"REGARD HIM THERE," MUTTERED THE MATRIARCH WITH
IMPATIENCE

NACIO

HIS AFFAIRS

BY

ELEANOR MERCEIN

(Mrs. Kelly)

With Drawings by

AMY HOGEBROOM



"One of those existing entireties of
almost infinite duration which is called
a race."

—PIERRE LOTI.

PUBLISHERS
HARPER & BROTHERS

NEW YORK AND LONDON

1931

N A C I O

His Affairs

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Printed in the U. S. A.

First Edition

A-F

*This volume is dedicated
to the many unknown friends,
for surely they are more friends than strangers,
who have been good enough to ask for it,
with the grateful appreciation of
The Author*





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LEHENPHEREDIKIA



LEHENPHEREDIKIA

*Which Is Basque for Prologue,
or First Speaking*

AN AUTHOR-WOMAN sat in a treetop, gnawing at her pen—or perhaps it would be more accurate to say at her typewriter—and endeavoring to concentrate on the work in hand. It is a treetop her study shares with a squirrel's hollow and a mocking bird's nest—rather congenial neighbors, usually; yet she sat there trying to forget that Spring, a tactless season with which author-women have no concern except professionally, was functioning again outside; also that the Scottie pup, who has for a number of years given his personal attention to her exercise, had grown of late a bit stiff in the off hind leg, and over-content to pass his time snoring under her feet as puppies do not snore. Near by a plaintive radio repeated, with the tireless optimism of its kind, a statement to the effect that "I'll see you again, Whenever Spring breaks through again"—which the author-woman knew to be a plain lie. Life does not keep its assignments so punctiliously.

Altogether, an atmosphere of rather up-to-date

cynicism began to pervade that Kentucky treetop; which bade fair, since nothing is more contagious than cynicism, to cramp the creative energies of business-like old April herself—had not at the moment something happened. Across repinings and forebodings, across the tenor brayings of the radio and the middle-aged snorings of the pup who is a pup no more, came suddenly one faint, sweet, airy note that smote the heartstrings as if the heart were indeed the lyre poets like to call it. It may have been some unfamiliar bird-cry, passing over; it may have been one of those odd little five-holed wind instruments the toy-stores sell nowadays, made of chewing-gum, in order that, when weary of exercising their musical tastes, the young of the land may exercise other tastes in the national manner—nothing if not practical, we Americans! It may even have been a letter which lay unanswered on her desk, translating itself aurally to the subconscious—one of those friendly “fan” letters all authors pretend to scorn, but which serve, nevertheless, very gratefully to remind them that authorship is not, after all, such a lonesome one-man affair. Whatever it was, the writer suddenly closed her eyes and saw things, as one does with closed eyes:

High treeless meadows above a cloud, bathed in a curious opaque light, as if one had penetrated the

heart of a moonstone—capricious, laughing, darkling Southern mountains, sweet and moody as spoiled women, covering their breasts with robes of blossom, shrouding their high heads in mantillas of mist—valleys of the upper ranges where the sun lingers and the wind blows softly, straight out of Africa; where the snow comes tumbling down translated into eager waterfalls, so that the air is always full of the music of it, and of little bells, and of bees.

And suddenly she reached for the “fan” letter (it was one of many demanding to know what had become lately of a certain Basque family named Urruty) and seized her pen, and wrote across the bottom of it: “I don’t know! I’m going over to see”—and went.

At first Madame Pantchika of the inn did not recognize me; one saw her thinking: “*Flûte!* Only another of these *artistes* who pay so badly!” But when I demanded *gaufrettes* to my déjeuner of brook trout, with an *omelette aux fines herbes*, and when I further demanded a demi-bottle of the very special Jurançon she had laid down for the very special occasion of Mademoiselle Bette’s marriage to Tubal Etcheverray (which did not come off), her eyes slowly widened upon me.

“*Tiens!* it is not?—But yes, it is!—*Madame*

l'écrivaine in person!—*Mais, toute seule? Quel dommage, ma chère,*" she said, gently patting the shoulder of my black dress; and immediately set me a table in its old place on the terrace over the rushing *gave*, where I might watch the village Place for old acquaintance, the while she bustled chattily about her kitchen, close at hand.

My table also commanded a view of the village *fronton*, where for once no game of pelota appeared to be in progress, although it was Sunday and Mass well over. Only Père Marcós, his soutane pulled up short into its rope girdle, his broad hat-brim crowning the back of his head like an appropriate saint's aureole, was trotting energetically about, bouncing a *pelota* ball against the wall of his church, in preparation, no doubt, for the afternoon's match. At monsieur le curé's age, commented Pantchika from amid her hospitable clatter of pots and pans, it saw itself that a man required to warm up the articulations more than in youth, *hein?*—particularly a holy man like Père Marcós, the religious life inclining the figure somewhat toward *embonpoint*.

Down the street, I noted the lame cobbler leaning upon his half-door—leaning over it, rather, at an angle which imminently courted disaster—in the effort to ascertain who and what might be breakfasting *chez* Madame Pantchika. To him I waved a hand of

greeting, calling out "*Comment va, Monsieur Lastra?*"—and immediately he came hurrying forth, wiping polite hands on the front of his cobbler's smock, to give me welcome; also to inquire tenderly as to the welfare of America; also to exchange with me any news and gossip that might be current on international subjects.—Had I yet learned, he demanded, of the signal favor conferred upon their house Arahaia by *le bon Dieu*, in the form of a male child lately born to Mademoiselle Chiquita, formerly one of the Señoritas Olhagarray, now wife to the winegrower Hercule Olhaiby, son of the blacksmith? The age of both parties considered, added the shoemaker, delicately, this event partook somewhat of the nature of a miracle—*n'est ce pas?*

Remembering shy little old dimpled Mademoiselle Chiquita with her dancing-class babies, I was delighted by these tidings of great joy. "But such miracles seem to be of more frequent occurrence in the Pays Basque than elsewhere, Lastra!"

"*N'est-ce pas, madame?*" he admitted, complacently. However, Hercule the winegrower, he shrugged, now regarding himself as entirely an American citizen, gave all credit to the California climate. * * * And had I heard of the new honors which had come to the valley, at the hands of one of its younger sons?

"Esteban Urruty, I suppose, has been winning more *pelota* championships?" But Lastra shook a negligent head; what more were there to win?

"You mean Monsieur Etcheverray's recent distinctions in the field of archæology?" But Lastra appeared not to have heard of these; nor could the savant be regarded, he intimated, quite as a younger son.

"Then, John de Maytie's success in the Spring Salon?"—Lastra smiled a superior, tolerant smile. Who could take seriously such queer depictions of ordinary objects made with mere paints upon canvas?

"No, no, madame! it is the lesser Urruty; the little one, you comprehend—Monsieur Nacio!" But what the "little one" had been doing—whom I recalled as an unusually tall and powerful specimen of Basque, with singularly expressive grave boy's eyes—I did not at the moment learn; for Lastra was called from me by the prolonged tinkle of his shop bell. He had only time, since business is business and waits no man's pleasure even on a Sunday, to murmur with sad pride over his departing shoulder: "Madame has heard, no doubt, of the fine new tombstone recently erected in our *ilerri*?"

I had not heard; and I did not ask whose tombstone it might be. I did not dare. * * *

Simultaneously with the arrival of my *frittura* of trout came a sudden clattering of hoofbeats along the cobbles, and a little cavalcade galloped smartly by. In the lead, coated and trousered like a boy, but with a charming pale-blond head I recognized gleaming bare in the sun, rode a young woman on a tall bay hunter; closely followed by the handsomest man I have ever seen, I think, who sat his horse unsaddled, in gypsy fashion, as if the two were one, his athlete's body lithe and muscular as a tiger's, his dark jutting profile lighted by a flashing smile for us as he passed. Pounding along at heel came two smaller horses; one carrying a young boy with his mother's silvery-blond head in surprising contrast with his father's ardent black eyes; the other a plump piebald pony doing its valiant best to keep up, incited to further efforts by much heel- and elbow-work on the part of a freckled and very determined little girl.

"Emily! Esteban! Stop!" I shouted, waving at them vigorously.

But they did not hear, and went galloping on with a courteous answering wave of the hand for the stranger within their gates.

"*N'importe*; they will return," consoled Pantchika. "Always they return. He is very fond, our Monsieur 'Steban, of the Sunday dancing in the Place, and sees to it that his children also habituate

themselves to our customs Basque, when they are in residence. As for Madame Emilie—one surprises oneself with how good an *etche kandere* she becomes; under the direction, to be sure, of our little Madame Bette. *Et quelle affaire du cœur, là!*—the inn-keeper sighed romantically. “Never in our valleys has been known such another marriage. Monsieur ’Steban will not permit his wife from his sight; whatever he does, that she must do also, although often enough, as you see, it is occupation unsuitable for a modest woman. Riding about, for example, mounted cross-legged upon a ferocious horse, as if for pleasure!—she who has at command the comfort of carriages, even of automobiles. They make exigent husbands, the Urruty; and of a jealousy—*nom de Dieu!*”—she lowered her voice impressively. “Hermose, the umbrella-mender, who sees all, assures one that Monsieur ’Steban has a jealousy even of his children, so that often he must take her away alone on his sailing-vessel as for the *lune de miel*. *En effet*, they love, those two, as if never married!—It is a custom American to love like that after marriage—no?”

I admitted with some patriotic pride that it was so considered. Pantchika, who had in the course of her sixty years already wedded and buried three good Basques and true, remarked thoughtfully that for

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her fourth venture she had the envy to achieve an American marriage.

"Which become quite usual in our valley, one sees, now that Monsieur Nacio also ——"

But again the affairs of Nacio were interrupted for me by the appearance of other friends, who came out of the door of the ancient house Ducontentia opposite, the arm of the elder thrown affectionately across the shoulders of the younger. They were the savant Etcheverray, Comte des Luynes, with his adopted son, John de Maytie, whom many people suspect of being his true son, but are not sure. Perhaps the Count and John themselves are not sure. Close friends they remain, at least, and closer than friends; sharing between them unspoken memories of the woman both adored, John's mother, Pilar; sharing between them also unfailing devotion to little Bette, John's wife, who had made for them a home out of the ruins of the Etcheverray chaste!l, L'Ey Kahatcia.

They paused in their conversation as they recognized me. "What, our good friend? And how does it happen," demanded Etcheverray, reproachfully, as he bent over my hand, "that you linger here to break your fast, on your way to our house? Bette will be truly angry!"

I explained that I had engaged rooms at the *fonda*.

"But, for what purpose?" he exclaimed. "If we were to arrive at L'Ey Kahatcia without you—*tiens!* we should simply have to retrace our steps!—and my old cart horse grows lazy."

"As it is, we shall arrive," added John, blushing with his attempt at manly unconcern, "just in time to see Bette bathe our twins—if you care for that sort of thing? They rather fancy an audience, themselves."

So I bade farewell to Pantchika, who grumbled a little, pleasantly, about the bread that was being taken out of an honest *aubergiste's* mouth, and went farther up the valley.

It was sunset, and the garrulous twins well bathed and supped and deposited in the nursery beside their smaller sister, before we went, all four of us, across the fields to the Urruty hacienda—one of those unforgettable Pyrenean sunsets that seem an affair of earth as well as of sky, reflected back from the deep mauve of upturned soil, the emerald of thrusting crops, the flashing crystal fretwork of channels cut crisscross through the slanting fields in order that the waters of the *gave* may be let into them at will for irrigation. As we approached the triangle of plâtanés which give shade to most Basque dooryards, we saw that Pedro Urruty, the alcalde, sat smoking his evening pipe on the stone door-bench, where he and his

mother had together watched so many evenings to their close; companionably silent, or discussing quietly the welfare of the little realm over which they ruled—the farm, the village, the valley. Even now he did not sit alone. Beside him, fat short legs stuck straight out in front after the fashion of legs of that age, perched the youngest of Esteban's children, Pedro the Less, the two deep in conversation—presumably upon the subject of the farm, the village, the valley. One heard, as we approached, a serious infant treble remarking thoughtfully: "*Mais, si je l'appelle 'Clovis', g'an'père, on ne trouve pas peut-être que c'est une chienne?*"

Pedro the Less referred, obviously, to one of a number of Briard pups which gamboled about, taking unseemly liberties with a bored elderly animal whom for one glad moment I mistook for my old friend Nagarro, himself. But as the dog rose suddenly to his noble height in warning of approach, I saw that it was Nagarro's son, Olivier; one of whose progeny—(the one whose unfortunate sex small Pedro hoped to disguise under the name of Clovis) attached itself forthwith and permanently to my person.

Pedro Urruty led us presently into his mother's kitchen—the formalities of the *salha* not being appropriate for such old friends—where hydromel was brought to us by a fat, exclamatory Madame Fancine;

also slices of hard red garlic sausage, and slabs of fine white bread, and pots of wild-thyme honey, and other *spécialités de place*; with, by way of climax to the entertainment, that most coveted medal in the gift of France, the *Croix de Guerre*.

"*Regardez-moi là, s'il vous plaît!* It is my son, mine," explained Madame Fancine, wheezing slightly with maternal pride, "not Esteban the *pelotari*, the world-voyager, the millionaire, but my son, Nacio, who has done this thing. And more!"

"*Tais-toi*, Fancine; in that affair of the Riff the boy but did his duty," murmured the alcalde; yet there was a ring of quiet pride in Pedro's voice, also.

And then, from somewhere beyond yet not too far beyond came the very sound that had brought me back to the Pyrenees—the clear, pure note of a shepherd's *chirilion*; mingled with another sound surprising enough in that unsophisticate vicinity—a fresh soprano voice of unusual quality, almost an operatic voice, so resonant and vibrant and poignantly sweet it was, although with a slight moving huskiness in the lower register. The two, flute and voice together, were attempting one of the strange and lovely airs of Debussy, or perhaps of Rimsky-Korsakov.

"What," I demanded, resentfully enough, "have we here?" One resents changes, somehow, in the Urruty neighborhood.

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They explained to me, all together, that it was only Nacio's *fillette*. "The pair make their twilight music together, as always, over in the mill-house studio."

"What, Nacio's daughter?"

I was amazed. Suddenly I recalled Esteban's young brother very clearly; the boy who came leaping down the hillside, where he was tending sheep that year, to stare with shy eagerness at Esteban's American sweetheart; the long-legged dreamy youth lying flat on his stomach in the middle of a work-day morning, absorbed in Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*; the disillusioned, sick-eyed visionary who had turned away from womenkind forever because he found them less—ah, so very much less!—than perfect. And I remembered, too, that the young Nacio had seemed to me then rather a tragic figure—as "differentness" is always tragic; no recognizable Basque type, perhaps, like the vigorous galliard Esteban, like sweet, sober, responsible little Bette; yet, nevertheless, a product of his environment, of that country once called, because of its many bards and troubadours, "the singing Pyrenees," whose history reads like a pageant done in heroic verse, as colorful, as stirring as the Song of Roland himself; still known to that region by his proper name of "Hruoland."

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I exclaimed, "So Nacio is married?"

Madame Fancine bridled. "*Pas encore,*" she murmured, demurely; and John de Maytie added, in our mutual vernacular; "Not yet, but soon—the sooner the better, if you ask me!"

So then I had from them at last the full story of Nacio and his affairs, as I have told it here; with the addition of a tale about him that has appeared already in my book of *Basquerie*, called "Sky Pastures," lest others may have forgotten the boy as I myself almost forgot. * * * And all the while, in accompaniment to the telling, sounded from the mill-house studio beyond the wandering harmonies his little flute made with the lovely singing of the young girl, Mariflor.

When the time arrived for me to return to work and civilization (is it not rather pathetic how we of America regard the terms as practically synonymous?) a sort of panic overtook me. I spoke of this to Tubal Etcheverray, who, in his courteous fashion, had come part way of the journey with me, down to St. Jean Pied-de-Port at the foot of the Pass of Hruoland, where I was to take the semi-weekly seaboard diligence.

"I think that I shall have to put in a transatlantic

telephone," I sighed, "if only for the purpose of calling up the Pyrenees now and then to demand, in the polite British fashion, 'Are you there?'"

"With the idea that the Pyrenees will respond, in our rude French fashion, 'Allo, Allo, Allo?'" murmured the savant, accommodating himself as always to a whim of fancy.

"Yes—Oh, but suppose they didn't respond, Tubal? Suppose I could never find my way back here again? Suppose—suppose there isn't really any 'here,' blessedly familiar as it seems!—that you are all, the lot of you, just people I've made up, as the children say, out of my own head?"

Smiling, he held out a hand of reassurance—a slender, fragile, thinker's hand, yet substantial enough for any friend to hold fast by in time of need. "I know—one has occasionally such odd fancies, even of life itself: that it is a thing impermanent, unreal, something one may have made up out of the head! Perhaps," he went on, musingly, "death will also seem to us like that—something unreal, impermanent, yet, as you say, blessedly familiar.—You will return, I hope, *chère madame*, whenever you have need of us."

"And find you here?" I persisted. "Just as always?"

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“Just as always?” he shrugged, with his quizzical, quiet smile. “Eh, well, why not? Us, or others like us”—and reminded me that those Singing Pyrenees are also called, in the Euskara tongue, “the land where time delays.”

SKY PASTURES





I

SKY PASTURES

"IN MY opinion," remarked Madame Urruty, gazing inimically at the slim, long person of her youngest grandson, "that one hears bells."

It was one of the expressive peasant idioms her American granddaughter-in-law often found so apt, indicating that the hearer of bells was mentally not

quite there; but as applied to Nacio, it surprised her, for it seemed to Emily that her husband's young half brother was mentally rather more than there. At the priests' college near Toulouse he stood so well in his studies, indeed, as to cause among his family a secret fear lest he intend to become a priest himself. Fortunately the period of his military service was near at hand; which should present, it was felt, a wholesome antidote.

"Regard him there," muttered the matriarch with impatience, "lying flat on his stomach in the middle of a morning, with a book under his nose. A book! You observe it? As if time were a thing which lasts forever!"

Emily reminded the old lady that time is a thing which lasts forever; it is only ourselves who change and pass.

"*Zut!*" said Madame Urruty. "In that case let us hope this worthless *doguin*, this long-legged puppy of a do-nothing, will change and pass into something else as quickly as possible. What," she demanded in the vernacular, "is eating my grandson? I ask myself!"

Emily eyed the boy with a rather guilty feeling. She knew quite well what was eating him. She recognized the fat green volume which lay under his nose in the middle of a morning, among the pink

heather and blue periwinkle of a hillside meadow, from which he occasionally lifted his head to shout stentorian and by no means ineffective orders at a number of people who were moving about in the field just below his vantage point.

It was not a learned volume; it had once belonged to herself, sole survivor of a youth much earlier and more brief than Nacio's; when she believed for a time not only in fairies but in knights *sans peur et sans reproche*, blameless Sir Galahads like the one in the Boston Library, who roamed the world on milk-white steeds, bearing a strong resemblance to Miss Ellen Terry and seeking for damsels to be rescued from their dragons—or was it Saint Michael who specialized in that sort of thing? She had long since forgotten the details of that fat green book; but never the glamour of it, never the color of rose it cast for a while upon the middle of her own morning; until she graduated to Bernard Shaw, and Ibsen, and other authors whom her father considered more suitable for an intelligent young woman who had her way to make in society.

Oddly enough, she had, since her marriage, reverted to jejune tastes. Mr. Shaw seemed to her dry and old; he creaked a little. Ibsen's tragic profundities moved her to nothing more than pitying distaste. Perhaps she had outgrown tragedy and

irony. She read the ultra-moderns, of course, from a sense of duty, having left a blanket order for them with her London bookseller; but read them smiling in her sleeve, thinking, "We know a thing worth two of that, Esteban and I"—as probably all happy married people read them, from Bath to Beersheba.

So that she eyed Nacio now with a certain sympathy, not unmixed with approval. Where else in the civilized world today would one encounter a vigorous and healthy youth, in what approximated the sophomore year of college, who could lose himself for days at a time, without shame, in the sentimental innocencies of Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*?

Since her addition to the Urruty family, its younger member had developed a passionate enthusiasm for things Anglo-Saxon—customs, history and language. To them her background appeared as romantic, she realized, as theirs to her—"Foreign cows wear long horns." And she felt a certain responsibility devolving upon her, as sole representative of the Anglo-Saxon race in an alien civilization. Nacio, in particular, practiced this form of hero worship; borrowed, whenever possible, Esteban's London-made clothes; cultivated a stilted and cautious Oxford accent, in the fond belief that he spoke American; and announced his intention of going in for, not *pelota* but tennis, or even a game known to

his college as "futbal"—a curious hybrid sport which would have astonished both English and American followers of the pigskin.

Since Emily had given him to read what she explained was an English classic, the boy had been going about with a vague dreaminess of aspect, that bright yet clouded wistfulness which is seen at its best in the eyes of very young hound dogs. The bells he heard were undoubtedly the bells of "many-towered Camelot town." Sometimes, catching his eager and expectant vision fixed unseeingly upon herself, Emily was aware that her pale bloneness figured for the moment as that of tragic Queen Guinevere, or the Lily Maid of Astolat, or the hapless Lady of Shalott. These were rôles difficult for a mere contented wife and mother to play up to; she began to consider filching back the *Idylls of the King*, and losing them.

It was the season for the irrigation of the fields: a simple enough process on the world's great watershed, where every gully, every path and roadway, has its accompanying little stream of pure cold water, which may, by the removal of well-placed stones, be turned at will into the many runlets channeled for the purpose through every field. After the first abundant harvest, in July, this melted snow is turned for a while into all the cultivated area to refresh it

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from its labors; after which grasses and weeds and wild flowers spring up apace, with the vigor of the magic beanstalk.

Nacio, being on holiday, was making himself useful, according to the matriarchal decree, by acting as overseer of this labor, while all the men, women and older children in his grandmother's employ went splashing about in sabots, with bare legs and upturned garments, converting her tilled lands into temporary swamps, and enjoying the process as all human creatures, large or small, enjoy the excuse for dabbling in water; a remnant of the day, perhaps, when man was merely protoplasm, drifting about in paleolithic ooze.

Nacio as an overseer was hardly a success, although the fields managed to flood themselves as thoroughly as if he were. Esteban in his place, or Pedro, or even Madame Urruty, would have been down among them, as barelegged and wet and busy as the best; but Nacio, a more modern type of general, preferred to give his orders from headquarters.

"I think," muttered the matriarch, turning away, "that this young *fainéant* will make himself less conspicuously useless in the high pastures again, among the other mutttons. At least his idleness will no longer offend the eye."

Emily ventured regretful protest; and Fancine,

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his mother, lifted up an aggrieved voice. The boy had served his apprenticeship with the flocks and herds; surely, after so long a time away from home with no more exciting company than that of beasts and priest, he was entitled to a little leisure in the bosom of his own family! But with the matriarch, as with others of strong will, opposition served only as a fixative. Leisure, she observed, like high cheeses and old liqueurs, was not good for youth; it gave ideas; and ideas, she intimated, were something which required a better brain than her grandson's to cope with.

"At any moment," she continued calmly, "we shall have this puppy fancying himself in love with his brother's wife—have you not noticed the sheep's eyes he casts already at our Emilie? But no, you would notice nothing, my poor Fancine, being but his mother. . . . It is the age for a *débâcle* of some sort."

Emily opened her lips in startled expostulation, but closed them again; how was she to explain to this shrewd, observant, cynically kind old woman that it was not at her Nacio cast his sheep's eyes, but at Guinevere, at the fair Elaine, at the Lady of Shalott?

Nacio, however, seemed entirely content with his grandmother's edict of banishment. He was a docile

youth, sweet-tempered like his father, with none of Esteban's masterful disposition.

"Up there," he said philosophically to Emily, "one has it more commodious, and with none of this eternal women's chatter about to disturb the thoughts."

Emily found the farm itself sufficiently commodious, almost too much so at times, since the only neighbor house in sight was the ruined tower of the ancient Etcheverray *maison forte*, L'Ey Kahatcia. It seemed to her that the boy was a little ungrateful, as well as unflattering; she had given a good deal of personal attention to the making of their young brother's holiday.

"What, you won't miss us up there?" She could not resist asking. "Not Bette"—who was his slave and shadow—"nor old Damasa"—who was happy to be waked at any moment to tell her favorite the stories he loved of witches and demons—"nor even me, dear Nacio?" The instinct of the flirt dies hard.

"I shall have my dog," said Nacio simply. "Also the *métayer's* son, young Essetore, who takes his first year with the sheep. And as for you, *belle-sœur*, you I shall have with me always, everywhere; there even more than here, where we have Esteban to come between. You know how I am jealous of Esteban?"

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She started. Was the matriarch right, as usual? Then, meeting the candid, adoring puppy gaze resting upon her so trustfully, she laughed in sheer relief. It was the head, she thought, of a Raphael seraph—the serious one—set on a figure by Michelangelo. Already the promise of a mustache shadowed Nacio's upper lip—a mustache which would never come to maturity, since Basques are invariably clean shaven—but the flushed brown skin, the wide eyes were soft and clear still as those of a young girl.

At this age, she realized, a boy is often far more beautiful than a girl; and despite certain little masculine awarenesses, far more innocent.

"If I only had Excalibur about me I should dub you my very perfect knight," she smiled, touching his shoulder as if for the accolade. "Durandel, your sword of Roland, would do even better. What has become of it, Nacio?"

"I buried it," he told her gravely, "when I became a man and went up to the pastures with the sheep. If you like, I will dig it up for you. But I have other things to show you there, *belle-sœur*. Will you come?"

She promised that she would. "We shall bring you a picnic soon, Bette and I and the baby people,

with perhaps Monsieur Etcheverray"—who often accompanied them when Esteban could not.

His eyes brightened eagerly. He wanted her to see the cave he had extended into a fine hut for himself, built out of bowlders, with the mountain for part of his roof and the rest of thatch. He had built furniture also, in the long lonely months—chairs, tables, bookshelves; his bed was made of the skins of wild animals—"Such a bed as Roland himself slept upon!"—and his chimney drew very well, with a hearth on which he cooked his meals.

"But my cave hut is a secret," he told her boyishly. "Only three people know of it: Bette, of course, and Esteban, and Monsieur Tubal."

"What, Etcheverray is in your confidence?" asked Emily surprised; it had not occurred to her that the absent-minded *littérateur* would be the confidant of boys.

"But certainly, he often comes to see me there. The things I have collected interest him; also he has a friend in the village on the other side—a Monsieur Zubaños. It was Monsieur Etcheverray," the boy added, "who taught me how to cook a hare in the pot, with savory wild herbs, as gypsies do. Our neighbor has many accomplishments."

He told her something of the treasures of his cave hut: Bones he had found near by of animals

larger than horses, perhaps of elephants—though how would elephants have mounted to the top of the Pyrenees?—queer old rusty weapons dug from the earth, which may have belonged to soldiers of Charlemagne; and things even more ancient—or so said Monsieur Tubal. Deep in the darkness at the far back of his cave, he had discovered a sort of table made of stones, which might have been a crude altar; and above it, almost gone, were faint traces of figures graven on the face of the rock, of men and of very strange beasts. There was also the imprint of a huge left hand, larger than hands are nowadays, with several finger joints missing; which Monsieur Tubal said was the hand mark of a sacrifice victim—Nacio paused abruptly.

“What eerie company!” exclaimed Emily. “What could the place have been—a cave temple, perhaps?”

“Perhaps,” he said noncommittally.

She realized that he was retiring into the reserve with which Basques usually greet any research into their past, but she persisted. After all, her children were Basque.

“Could it have been a temple for the worship of Laxarrou of the high pastures?”

“No. He was for Eskuala peoples.”

"And this is earlier than the Basque gods? Iberian, perhaps? Or Berber?"

"Earlier than that. The other people, from beyond." His brief gesture indicated the direction of the Atlantic Ocean. "It was they who worshiped in secret high places."

With a thrill of excitement she realized that by "the other people, from beyond" the boy was possibly suggesting inhabitants of the lost Atlantis, a prehistoric Crô-Magnon race from which many scientists believe Basques to be descended. It occurred to her that Nacio's discoveries might be of great scientific importance.

But he continued, with a firm change of subject, "And I have also there the body of my pet lamb, stuffed by myself, and the finest collection of bird eggs in the Haute Pyr!"

Emily smiled. "Is the lock on the door to be trusted with all these treasures, Nacio?"

There was no lock on the door, he answered in surprise; what need could there be of locks in the Haute Pyr? He had put a sign up over the entrance: "This is the house of Ignacio Urruty. Who enters is welcome. Go with God, and please to put out the fire before you leave." Naturally nobody, not even gypsies, would take advantage of one who so trusted them.

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Emily gazed in silence at this stalwart youth, broad in the shoulders as his father, with muscles of tempered steel, a speaking acquaintance with Greek and Sanskrit and various things of which she had never heard, and a passion for fairy tales; thinking with Madame Urruty that the sky pastures were the only safe place for him.

But according to Damasa, they were by no means safe. The *äieta-anna* spent one entire evening wide awake in her chimney corner, with Nacio, Emily and Bette for audience, warning her favorite of dangers to be encountered in high places. In a house—particularly in the house of Madame Urruty—there was comparatively little danger; it would take a brave devil, intimated Damasa, to beard old Léocadie under her own roof-tree. But out beneath the open sky—ah, then, beware of Deburria, and Trufadec, and all the rest! There were the Lamminak, those contrary-minded fairy folk, like the Irish Little People, who always meant the opposite of what they said, who led wayfarers astray with kind advice, and persuaded the cattle to go on strike to other pastures, and changed babies in their cradles, so that a mother would have to look sharp to know her own child. The reason there were so many witches and demons now abroad in the Soule and Labourd, explained Damasa in passing, was because

the Christian missionaries were chasing them out of China.

And there were others who had always lived here: Fagus, for example—he of the beech tree—was he such a friend to man as man in his conceit liked to fancy? By no means! Who had not heard of persons being killed by the sudden falling of a branch? And what man was fool enough to take shelter under a beech tree from a thunderstorm, for all its inviting spread of foliage? There was Laxarrou, god of the high pastures, who sometimes enchanted sheep, and also humans, so that they could not be made to leave the hills; and Aherbelste, deity of the black rocks, who had sent many a careless climber hurtling to his doom. Even Baïgorisc, deity of the red earth, needed at times to be propitiated with sacrifice, for a good harvest; and the sacrifice Baïgorisc preferred, whispered Damasa horribly, was human flesh!

The possibilities of high adventure among these various demons and fairies and deities grew apace, and Nacio quite kindled to them.

“Tell Emily the story of the Snake Princess, Anna-Damasa,” he urged. “I have forgotten it.”

The crone gave them her version of a tale which is current among all mountain peasants about their own hills, from Scotland to the Caucasus, even to the Kentucky Cumberlands; the story of the en-

chanted princess turned by a wicked fairy into the semblance of a snake, who in order to be released from her spell must be kissed three times on the lips by a pure youth.

This Snake Princess, said Damasa, lived undoubtedly on top of one of the Pics Nerés, possibly Canigou, or the Pic d'Aine, where the snow lingers last in summer; or Ping Pené in the Carlitte country—where the Ark is known to have rested, rather than on Mount Ararat, as ignorant people think; or quite possibly on their own La Rhune, to whose summit nobody dares to climb because of the witches who hold *sabbat* there. Wherever she was, she still awaited, said Damasa, the youth with a pure soul.

Once, it appeared, a young man of the valleys had found her weeping bitterly into a pool of frozen tears, and had kissed her once because he pitied her, kissed her twice because in his arms she suddenly felt like a beautiful young girl; but when he looked again, being a cautious youth, he saw that she was, after all, only a snake. And so he went away, promising to return for the third kiss. But then he was called to his military service, and so forgot; and it was quite a while before he thought any more of the Snake Princess. He set out to find her again, and did so; and in her joy at seeing him she looked so beautiful that he kissed her on the

mouth for the third time, quite willingly and often. But nothing happened.

"Why not?" asked Bette blankly.

"Why not?" repeated Nacio, puzzled to recall the point.

Old Damasa winked at Emily, and grinned a toothless grin.

"*Hé, hé!*" she chuckled. "Why not, indeed? Go find the snake yourself, *mon fils*—for you, I think, she may yet turn into a princess!"

"I do not like that story, Anna-Damasa," frowned Nacio, coloring suddenly. "You should not have told it to my sisters."

"They tell in the Jura another version," put in Emily. "They say that when the young man found the snake for the third time, he had grown wiser, and saw that it was not an enchanted princess after all, but only the wicked fairy herself, trying to make a snake out of him. And so he went away again, leaving her unknissed."

"Oh, but that is more nice," pronounced Bette. "Much more nice! . . . Isn't it, Nacio? And it served her right for allowing herself to be knissed like that by a strange young man, out of pity." * * *

There is an especial holiday for shepherds in that land of special holidays, when the fires of Saint Jean make all the mountainsides beautiful by night;

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and afterward their ashes are scattered over the fields to make them fruitful—Saint Jean Baptiste being, perhaps, a lineal descendant of the deity Baïgorisc.

It was thought, naturally, that Nacio would return to pass the holiday among his own people, but he did not do so. Essetore, his shepherd boy, reported that he had celebrated Saint Jean instead at a village on the far side, nearer to the pastures; a village not very distant from their own village as the crow flies, but separated from it by a mountain peak, several bad precipices, and a thickly wooded valley, so that there was little intercourse between the two. The only road connecting them, indeed, was barely more than a mule track, impassable for vehicles, used chiefly by the *maledetta* on their night adventures into Spain, or by the shepherds with their flocks. Emily had never seen this village, fond as she was of exploring the mountains far and near.

"It is nothing to see," shrugged Esteban. "Only a few old crazy houses, a *pelota* court that is a disgrace to the canton, and the house of Zubaños, the painter—who calls himself Spaniard, but is the son of good Basque peasantry, more's the pity!"

Emily pricked an interested ear. "What! Zubaños lives in this neighborhood? Why, I gathered my first impression of Basque life from his pictures—

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I thought all of you wore orange coats and trousers of indigo blue, and lived in houses with rainbow roofs! How does it happen we have never seen him?"

Her husband shrugged. "The society of an artist *chez lui*," he said with the primness of a Yankee schoolma'am, "is not the society a man chooses for his young wife!"—and Emily realized with amusement that she was once more being kept unspotted from the world. She registered a mental vow, however, to make the acquaintance of Señor Zubaños as soon as feasible; believing herself to be quite immune from the contagions of artistry.

So, on a cool, wind-bright morning, when the singing breeze that swept the valley seemed to call to high adventure, she surprised Nacio with his promised picnic. They went on horseback; herself with the infant Léocadie, who was of a distinctly sporting temperament, chuckling and gurgling from a sort of pillion basket in front of her saddle; Bette with small Wally manfully astride behind her; and for bodyguard their neighbor, Etcheverray, since Esteban could not be spared from his farm labors at this season of the year. Esteban took the business of the farm far more seriously than he had ever taken the business of fortune making.

Their mountain-bred horses followed the trail like

goats, picking their way very surely, mounting up and up until, high against the sky line, Etcheverray pointed out a huddle of stones which he told them was Nacio's cave hut. Tethering the horses below, near the road, they made the rest of the climb on foot, among surprised and staring sheep, until the dog Olivier rushed out to welcome them with frantic demonstrations, and Essetore presently appeared, all grins. The master, he said—that was Nacio—had gone down to the village beyond to buy provisions. But yes, the master frequently went to the village nowadays to buy provisions.

"Evidently Nacio does not find solitude quite so congenial as before," murmured Emily.

Etcheverray did not answer. He was looking quizzically at a shawl which lay on Nacio's pile of skins—his Roland bed: a brightly embroidered woman's shawl, with long silk fringes. Emily herself had a startled moment; then she smiled. He had bought it undoubtedly from passing smugglers as a present for one of them at home; perhaps for herself. It was green, a color she often wore.

She looked about her with sympathetic interest at the boy's dwelling place, the mysterious rear of which was curtained off from observation by hanging blankets; neat as a man's house is often neat, the hearth carefully swept and laid ready for firing, food

labeled nicely in little jars on a shelf, books everywhere, conveniently arranged so that one saw at once what was there. She missed, incidentally, the *Idylls of the King*. Was he outgrowing them already? She smiled over the birds' eggs, carefully named, the mastodonic bones, the gruesomely realistic stuffed pet lamb. When his dog Olivier died, doubtless Nacio would stuff him also; tearfully, but with a certain pride in his taxidermy.

"Bette, you and the baby people will stay with Olivier and Essetore," she said, "and prepare the picnic, while the Count and I go down to the village to find Nacio." . . . Also to call on the painter Zubaños, she confided later to Etcheverray, who assented doubtfully.

"Myself, I find him interesting; a man of no morals and many virtues. But—probably he will be from home today; he is very frequently from home. And probably, also, Esteban will call me out, with pistols, when he finds in what an adventure I am encouraging you," he added dryly. "However, I am, as always, at your service."

"Dear me," said Emily, "you act—the lot of you—as if this Zubaños were a sort of ogre seeking whom he may devour; whereas he is probably quite a harmless old victim of the artistic reputation."

"He is, as madame suggests, at least not young;

and if he happens to be something of an ogre"—Etcheverray shrugged—"madame has, no doubt, a spell to cast on ogres, as on the rest of us."

The village, visible from Nacio's aerie, was a huddle of humble roofs of odd angles clinging about a tall open belfry; one of those mountain hamlets which are so picturesque seen from a distance, but which resolve themselves on close acquaintance into one narrow dusty street, unshaded from the glare, upon which open a few mean houses with curtains across their doors; uninhabited apparently, except by a mangy cur or two scratching fleas in the center of traffic.

They traversed this street, looking in vain for Nacio, until they came to a more pretentious house at the far end, with a wall in front of it and a pair of fine gates of foliated iron, through which a courtyard was visible, and the plain façade of a house with a sundial upon it.

"Aha, the ogre's castle!" murmured Emily with satisfaction, pulling at a long bell handle that hung beside the gates. From far inside they could hear a faint jangling. The courtyard remained quite still, except for some pigeons strutting and cooing upon the tiled well curb.

"Evidently," murmured Etcheverray in some relief, "Zubaños is not here."

"It looks promising. Let us go in and see," said Emily serenely.

Uneasily Etcheverray followed her across the drowsy courtyard, reminding her that it was the hour of siesta.

"In Spain it would be, but this is not Spain." Emily's taste for adventure grew with practice.

She put a tentative hand on one of the brown curtains drawn outside across doors and windows in the Spanish fashion, and disclosed an open tiled passageway, through which the sound of a monotonous, droning voice was faintly audible. "At least they aren't all asleep," she murmured, with a mischievous chuckle for the other's perturbation; and followed the direction of the voice.

It came from a room beyond, which she recognized on sight as a studio; a great, long room filled with color and canvases and the pleasant smell of paint, at whose far end was a dais with a model throne upon it. And seated on the model throne, as if painted there by Rossetti, or Burne-Jones, or possibly Watts, their eyes focused upon a *Moyen-Age* vision in a long green-velvet gown, roped with pearls. On either side of her breasts hung down a thick long rope of hair. "'Yellow as ripe corn,'" thought Emily inevitably. The lovely little head on its long full throat, the pose, the passionate lips,



AT THE FEET OF THIS VISION LAY A YOUTH

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the rather empty wide gray eyes, took her at once back to the Tate Gallery; or was it the Wallace Collection? Something very British and naïve and familiar. And at the feet of this *Moyen-Age* vision, very suitably, lay a youth flat on his stomach, reading out of a fat green book.

It was the *Moyen-Age* vision who saw them first, with a startled sidelong sweep of long lashes. The boy turned his gaze to follow hers, and leaped to his feet with a cry of pleasure.

"What! Is it possible? You of all people! How I have wished for you to know each other! . . . Dorotea, it is Emilie—Emilie of whom you have heard me always talking—with our friend Etcheverray, from L'Ey Kahatcia. They two, of all the world!"

"Charmed, I'm sure," murmured a voice of liquid music, in the genteel accents of Maida Vale. "If this isn't a treat! You're the American girl, aren't you, who married one of the natives here? Not that I blame you! They're a lot more gentlemanly in their actions than the French, if you ask me. I've been wanting to know you ever since Nasho told me about you," she added kindly.

"Thank you. Nacio should have brought you to us," murmured Emily, her mind going around in circles. Who—what—how was this?

"I wished to do so; I wished it very much," said the boy earnestly. "I begged Dorotea to go with me to the feast of Saint Jean in our village. But she would not leave; she was afraid her father would return in her absence and miss her. He is old, you see, and depends upon Dorotea."

Her father? The painter had married an Englishwoman, perhaps? Emily wondered.

"I did not know," Etcheverray was murmuring courteously, "that my friend Zubaños had recently acquired so charming a daughter."

"Adopted," she corrected, again with that little sidelong flutter of lashes, "and not so recently at that. My father and mother and Mr. Zubaños were great friends, and so when they died, he took me on, you see, while I was still a kiddie."

"I see," said Emily, beginning to collect her wits. "And I think you are not quite a stranger to me after all. I have seen you in Señor Zubaños' paintings, have I not?"

"Oh yes, I generally pose for him," said the girl indifferently. "That is, when he uses a blonde. Pity he isn't here to see you, Mrs. Urruty; you'd be a treat to him," she added. "Light flesh tints are so hard to find on the Continong!"

"Are they?" murmured Emily. "I am sorry to take my brother away, but we must be going back

to my children. Perhaps Señor Zubaios will bring you to us one day?" she added politely, hardly knowing what else to say; and elicited a flash of resentment.

"That man? Why, he wouldn't take a person anywhere if she asked him on bended knee! What does he think a girl's made of—stuck off here in this nasty hole, miles from a cinema or a shop, nothing to do but eat, and afraid to do too much of that because she might lose her lines? Honestly, Nasho's been a godsend to me—haven't you, dearie?"

"Have I?" he breathed, very blissful and quiet.

He tore himself away from her with manifest reluctance, running back more than once to beg her to come with them. "But it is a pic-a-nic, the way you eat in England!" they heard him urging eagerly. "My sister Bette is with them, my brother's babies—you will like those! And my grandmother—I know her—will have sent more food than we could finish in a week. They are my people! You will not come with us?"

The *Moyen-Age* vision, however, had the tact to decline.

"What do you think of her?" he burst out joyously as soon as they were beyond earshot—the age-old question asked doubtless by Cain, in love, of his mother Eve. Emily saw that she had already sur-

rendered to another her position of Elaine-Guinevere-Shalott. Fortunately he could not wait for their answer; he had so much to say himself.

"What it was to find her here, of all places! Blond as you, *belle-sœur*, with hair even more a fleece of gold, and the same clear, beautiful English speech." Emily winced; she was guilty perhaps of the faults of her native States, but not of Maida Vale. "Hidden away in this rough old place like ——"

"Like an enchanted princess?" finished Emily, with a sudden anxious memory of the Snake Fairy.

"Yes! How you always understand!" breathed Nacio, kissing her hand in gratitude. "Now you know why I did not return to spend the shepherd's day with you—I was with her! Just we two alone together, till the moon rose and set again. Ah! She loves our legends, Emilie; she lets me play to her by the hour on the *chirilion*. Sometimes up here in the starlight"—they were nearing his hut—"it is like heaven: we two alone together above the world."

"She comes to you here?" asked Etcheverray. The mystery of the shawl explained itself.

"She does me that honor," said the boy, with a special little dignity, as if half aware that the occasion required it. "She finds it lonely there in the village, with her father absent; no one to speak with, no

one to understand her language. She adores poetry, Emilie, like you and me; she lets me read to her for hours out of our book—you know?" he reminded her boyishly. "And that is kind of her, for, as you remember, I do not read the English very well. But she is always kind. And, of course, we do not always make music or read together."

"No?" encouraged Emily faintly.

"Ah, no, indeed! Sometimes we talk. Sometimes we do not even talk. We simply sit together, gazing down on the sleeping valleys which do not know our happiness, pitying them, dreaming together ——"

"Hand in hand, perhaps?" encouraged Emily further, with the guilty feeling of those who peep through keyholes.

"Ah, never! Do not tease me, *belle-sœur!*"—he blushed. "I would not dare to take her hand. You see, I love her," he said, with a gentleness which brought a lump into her throat, a sharp exquisite memory of his brother's gentle wooing.

She and Etcheverray exchanged a helpless glance.

"Good heavens, Des Luynes!" she said later. "Do they learn nothing, there at Toulouse, except Sanskrit and Greek and idiotic things like that? Nothing of life?"

He shrugged; his habitual gesture. "Unfortu-

nately there is no longer a College de Gai Savoir at Toulouse, as formerly, in the days of Clemence Isaure. How can the priests teach what they do not know?"

She groaned. "What shall we do about this?"

"Do? But nothing, *chère madame*. Whatever we could do would be—too much," warned the other, who knew whereof he spoke. He added after a moment, significantly, "Zubaños will soon return."

Not long afterward, Bette came to Emily with trouble in her face—Bette the responsible, to whom all people, even her grandmother, turned in times of need. She had a question to ask: Among married people was it obligatory to tell everything, or was a wife permitted to keep to herself a secret not her own? Emily, on the horns of a dilemma, aware that her reply might serve as precedent on occasions yet to come, made the impromptu decision that a wife might use her judgment; with happily married people, she told the anxious little girl, there was so deep an understanding that confidences need not always be spoken, particularly if they concerned the affairs of other people. Bette, manifestly relieved, unburdened herself.

Nacio—her adored Nacio—was in some difficulty; he had sent Essetore, his shepherd boy, to her under cover of darkness on a secret errand. She was to

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give Essetore, for Nacio, a purse well filled with money, a cloak large enough to cover a woman's dress, and a pistol with cartridges; and she was to say no word of this to anybody, especially not to Esteban, nor his father, nor *la madre*.

"But if I am to send a purse full of money, I must get it from somebody," explained Bette. "And he said nothing about keeping the secret from you, *belle-sœur*, who understand everything. I trouble myself about the pistol. What need has Nacio, alone on the mountains with sheep, of a pistol?"

What indeed? Emily, now thoroughly alarmed, did her best to reassure the little sister. She was going to ride with Monsieur Etcheverray that evening, she said, to see the moon rise over the edge of La Rhune, and would herself carry to Nacio the things he required.—It was another impromptu decision; just how she would explain to Esteban this unprecedented moonlight excursion alone with another man, she did not know. Here was perhaps a test of the married confidence of which she had just boasted.

But the test held. Esteban made no comment; explaining carelessly to the family after she had left with Etcheverray that he wished to encourage this growing friendship with their poor Tubal, who needed more of the company of women.

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"And to that end you offer him your wife?" commented his stepmother in astonishment. "But what a trusting nature, my Esteban!"

"It is a nature which knows when to trust," commented her husband staunchly; the Urruty men invariably stood back to back in an emergency.

They were still standing back to back, silent and anxious and rather grim, when the pounding of hoofs on turf announced the return of the moon riders, well after midnight; and Esteban, stepping out silently to lift his wife from the saddle, lifted down, instead, a perfectly strange young woman, with blonde braids of hair falling over a dress of bedraggled velvet, who burst into tears on his shoulder and besought him to save somebody—Esteban was too astonished to ask whom.

Etcheverray spoke from the dark, urgently: "Your wife awaits you, with Nacio, in the high pastures, Esteban. She asks that this young woman be given into the hands of the ladies, while you and Pedro return at once with me. To see," he added in a lower tone, "whether it is true that Nacio has killed Zubaños."

It was a curious picture Emily and the Count had found some hours earlier, when they reached the shepherd's hut: Nacio seated on a rock in the moon-

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light, like Pan himself, playing to his drowsy flocks; the music of the *chirilion* coming down to them as they climbed—thin airy music, cool and faint, which Emily remembered to have thought when first she heard it in the very voice of the Pyrenees. About the serried ranks of the sheep, bristling, important, evidently on sentry duty, marched Olivier, the dog, too much occupied to give them more than a brief wag and a bay of greeting; at which Nacio leaped down from his rock and ran to them, finger on lip.

“Speak softly. *She* is in there, asleep!”

“Not that girl?” Emily’s worst fears were realized.

“Yes, it is Dorotea! She has come to me, my friends—come to me forever. She trusts me, although she has little reason to trust men. She lies there on my bed and sleeps, while I watch. Is it not charming of her? But now we must go away, for I have killed a man.”

“Oh, Nacio! It’s not possible!” But Emily saw that it was possible, even probable. Nacio’s whole look had changed. The face was quite calm, even exalted, but it was no longer the face of a serious seraph. Nacio had grown overnight to his inches.

“Do not be frightened, *belle-sœur*,” he said gently. “That one needed killing. Here in the valleys we do not tolerate such men as Zubaños. Things

were not as I thought. He has never been as an indulgent parent to my Dorotea, a kind old friend. *Au contraire!* He returned unexpectedly while I was at his house, and very quietly, as if hoping to surprise us—why he should wish to do that, I do not know. But suddenly there was a commotion, a great outcry, and he had laid his hands on Dorotea. I think he meant to beat her, because I was there. The words he said—but I will not soil your ears by repeating them! Only one thing I must explain.” He looked at them so piteously that Emily wanted to hide his hurt eyes on her breast. “As I told you, he has not been as a father to Dorotea. He has the ambition, old and hideous as he is, to become her lover. Yes, it is like that!” He made a gesture of tragedy. “Could there be a more terrible situation for a woman?”

“But—why did she not leave him at once?”

“How could she? Without money, without friend. There is nobody to help her but myself. She has told me so!”

Emily groaned. “My dear—what did you do?”

“As I have said, I killed him. It was quite easy.” He looked at his hands as if surprised to find what effective weapons he carried about with him. “I lost my temper when he touched her, I took him by the throat—I am very strong—and choked and

choked him until he fell, with blood at the mouth. Then I brought Dorotea away with me to a safer place. That is all."

"This happened during the morning?" It was the first time Etcheverray had spoken.

"At noon, during the hour of siesta," Nacio replied.

Etcheverray gave a great sigh of relief. "In that case they would have found his body long before this, *mon fils*, and come to take you."

The boy gave a shrug of indifference. "Probably. It is possible I have not killed him, then. No matter. I should not have run from them. I have done nothing to regret—only it was necessary first to take Dorotea away to a safer place. If he lives, she shall at least never go back to him. He is unfit!"

Emily felt her way delicately. "But, dear boy, even if he has not been quite a father to her, as you say, he has been for some time her guardian, her protector, has he not?"

"And what a protector!"

"Even so! After all, she is not a child; she is older than yourself. Nacio, dear, a woman like that was old before you were born!"

She was almost relieved to see that he did not understand her, however. "She is only twenty," he protested. "Three years older—what is that? To

marry a woman older than oneself is very settling. I have heard *la madre* say so."

"Almost too settling," murmured Emily, aghast. "Has it ever occurred to you that Señor Zubaños might have certain rights?"

"Rights! What rights?"

"Men of the world might consider ——" But she could not finish that. "Perhaps Señor Zubaños felt he had cause to be jealous of you," was her lame conclusion.

"He should have controlled his jealousy, then," said the boy calmly. "After all I am the younger, the handsomer; why should she not love me? You speak of rights, *belle-sœur*. Such rights as he might have had, to gratitude, to kindness, to respect for his years, he has forfeited by his conduct. You see, you do not know all! She has told me much that I cannot speak of to you, Emilie, but—you remember seeing certain pictures for which she served as model? *Alors*, there are other pictures you cannot have seen, being a woman. Dorotea was forced to be the model also for those! Must I speak more plainly? She has, it appears, a beautiful body"—he spoke with touching reverence—"a body even more beautiful than her face. That man, if you can credit it, that friend of her parents, that brute whom you call her guardian and protector—he has forced her to ex-

pose her body to the gaze of all the world. He has forced her, the demon, to pose for his pictures in—in the altogether!”

Emily's gaze besought help from the Comte des Luynes, and found none. She made a final effort. “You are sure he *forced* her to do this?” she asked faintly. “My dear little brother, don't you realize that art knows no convention? Some of the greatest art existing owes itself to the—the public spirit of nude models. Why, the sister of an emperor—of Napoleon himself—did not disdain to lend her beautiful body to the cause of art!”

Nacio looked at her. “I am not an emperor,” he said. “If a man so much as suggested painting the nude body of one of my sisters, I should kill him, as I have killed Zubaños, with my two hands! Ah, no, *belle-sœur*; if I have come too late to protect her innocent childhood, I can at least protect the womanhood of my Dorotea!”

Emily was silenced, damning in her heart the complete poetic works of Alfred, Lord Tennyson.

The girl herself appeared in the door of the hut at that moment, a lovely disheveled vision, still in the *Moyen-Age* robe, with a great mass of hair falling about her like a cloak of copper gold.

“Oh, ain't it awful?” she cried in her musical, plaintive cockney. “Would you ever have guessed

Nasho could act so fierce? What are you going to do? You wouldn't separate us now, after all we've been through together? Why, Nasho's all I've got, since Zubaños turned against me." Large, lovely tears began to roll out of her large and lovely eyes. "My word, you'd ought to have seen 'em! At each other's throats all in a minute, they were, like a pair of bulldogs looking for a grip. Oh, Gawd, maybe I wasn't scared! I'm still scared, for that matter," she sobbed; "and Nasho isn't much of a comfort to me, I must say, making me lie down in here all by myself while he sits outside on that rock, tootling on his nasty little flute!"

The girl was evidently completely overwrought; and Nacio, with a beautiful gesture of protecting manhood, went to her and took her in his arms.

Apparently he no longer feared to touch his lady's hand. She had ceased to be the Lily Maid; but she could still qualify, perhaps, for Guinevere.

It was Etcheverray who suggested taking the girl to the Urruty hacienda, and returning with Esteban and Pedro to see how matters stood with Zubaños. The boy, exhausted after his late emotions, acceded with gratitude to any suggestion, provided his Dorotea was not returned to the painter's house. He even consented to lie down on his pile of skins and sleep, while Emily took his place on guard over

the flock; a strange experience to add to her collection, that long night alone in the hush of high moonlit desolation, listening momentarily for the arrival of the outraged painter, or of the *garde civile* to arrest the boy for his death. She was somewhat reassured and soothed by the browsing, tinkling sounds made by the sheep, by the alert and sleepless company of the dog Olivier, who did not know what might be amiss, but was, as always, prepared to grapple with it on sight. At dawn Esteban came to her, running, pale with concern; and never was wife more gladly aware of the broad capacity of her husband's shoulders.

There followed, of course, the anticlimax; in life, as in Nature, the atmosphere of great altitudes is too rarefied for ordinary lungs. Etcheverray and Pedro Urruty returned from their investigations on the far side of the mountain, looking rather sheepish. No, Zubaños was by no means dead; they had seen him.

"Hah!" muttered Esteban. "What did the fellow do?"

"He laughed," was the surprising reply. "Although his throat is bound up in bandages as for a diphtheria. 'So,' he said, 'my good Christian neighbors, you have taken the little Dotty under your protection? But that is *épatant*! Keep her, my

friends—keep her by all means, as long as you like. It saves me money! But when you weary of playing the good Samaritan, you may return the girl to me, if you please; for by that time I shall have reached the point in my modernist Crucifixion where I shall need her hair for the Magdalene.’ ”

Esteban stared without comment.

“He sent a further message by me, to you Urruty,” added Etcheverray. “He said, ‘Tell them to keep their pretty Nacio at home now; for if ever again I find a strange young *dindon* strutting it in my hen yard, I shall certainly have somebody wring its neck; being much too fat and lazy myself to risk any further encounters with an impassioned turkey cock!’ ”

The older Urruty held a family consultation, with Etcheverray present in an advisory capacity.

“We seem to have the young woman on our hands,” said Pedro. “What are we going to do with Nacio?”

“Keep him busy,” counseled the matriarch; her one panacea for all ills.

“Get her off your hands as soon as is possible,” advised Etcheverray. “Propinquity at this stage may prove dangerous indeed.”

That, said Emily, was easier said than done;

they could not very well expose the girl on the hillside for ravens to pluck at, after Sparta's fashion of dealing with unwanted female children.

"We will give her money to go away," was Esteban's simple masculine solution.

"Impossible!" reminded his father. "She is an invited guest of our house!" The rights of guests were sacred.

"And even if you sent her away like that," added Emily, "Nacio would go charging straight after her, lance in rest. Don't you realize that he is busy being the complete thing in knights-errant?"

"I realize that he is busy being an even greater fool than he was born," muttered his grandmother. "What does the *doguin* expect? To marry her?"

Exactly that, sighed his father; reminding them that Nacio would cease to be a boy on his eighteenth birthday, when he came into his own inheritance.

"As to that, I myself shall have something to say! He brings no wife to this house without my consent so long as I am *etche kandere* here," said the matriarch sternly.

But Emily, who was in his confidence, explained that Nacio had no intention of bringing his wife to live in the *etcheonda*; he intended to take his inheritance and go away with her out into the wide,

wide world to make a fortune like Esteban's—presumably by writing poetry.

"*Tiens*, that is serious; that I cannot forbid!" muttered the matriarch. "A man is a man, even in the basket."

Emily was reminded of the story which originated this familiar saying: An Amazonian Basque woman, having married a small and ineffectual husband, found him superfluous, and decided to get rid of him. So she popped him unawares, one day, into the hamper in which she carried clothes to the washing stones, and started off to the river to drown him.

But on the way a vicious dog attacked her, and as she was afraid of dogs, she asked her husband to lift up his manly voice and scare the brute away. The husband consented, on condition that he be let out of the basket; and remained the head of his household ever after.

"No, I cannot forbid a man to marry where he chooses," mused the matriarch. "However, he has a mother; and if a woman may not choose her own children, she may at least choose her children-in-law. . . . Eh, Fancine? You will not permit this young imbecile to ruin himself by trying to make a *cabotine* respectable?" For Madame Urruty from

the first had cherished no romantic illusions about their guest.

"Me? What can I do?" moaned Pedro's wife, wringing her plump hands. "Nobody listens to me in this house, least of all my own children!"

"You can at least take some of your children and go away, while this Dorotea is with us," remarked the matriarch in disgust. "She is no suitable influence for *jeunes filles bien élevées*."

Fancine meekly did as she was bid, taking well-elevated Bette and the smaller girls to her parents for a visit, while Nacio's Dorotea was left somewhat in command of the situation.

The girl made the most of it. Despite the wide gray blankness of her gaze, she had apparently a few thoughts of her own—those thoughts of youth which are frequently such long, long thoughts. She had taken in at a glance the comfort, even the luxury, of the Urruty surroundings.

"My word, they do themselves well for natives, don't they?" she commented privately to Emily, whom she apparently regarded, to the latter's dismay, as a kindred spirit; and her manner with Nacio became less carelessly proprietary and more deferential, as to the strong, all-conquering male. It was evident that if Nacio intended to marry her on the

arrival of his eighteenth birthday, she intended quite as fully to marry Nacio.

Emily felt more and more helpless to deal with the affair, although she realized that in this emergency the Urruty were for once relying upon her, rather than themselves.

"Leave this to my wife," she had heard Esteban advise his grandmother confidently. "In these things she is very wise."

But the girl Dorothy—who preferred, she said graciously, to be called Dotty by her friends—became more lovely daily, even in her own commonplace clothing, which Zubaños had shown the irony to send her to replace his model costume. She had settled into the situation with the ease of a pretty stray cat, and spent her time sleeping and smoothing her fur. She had adopted with alacrity the Spanish custom of the siesta, which with her began early in the day and lasted late, much to Emily's relief, since she dreaded the entertainment of their guest.

But the bathtub was apparently sufficient entertainment; the girl took a rather pathetic pleasure in its plenitude of hot water and fragrant bath salts and scented soaps and unguents.

"This is the first time I've been really clean since I struck the Continong!" she remarked with a candid satisfaction, ignoring Emily's faint suggestion

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that with determination it was possible to acquire cleanliness even when lacking a porcelain tub and running water.

Only toward evening did Dorothy emerge in full blossom, as it were, ready for Nacio; her copper-gold hair gleaming from the brush, her skin the whiteness of rich milk, with beneath it that inimitable, beautiful play of color which is the heritage of healthy English youth.

The boy had returned to his sheep without protest, even gladly, reassured as to his lady's safety. To dream of the beloved is, at a certain age, even more delightful than to be with her; and the sky pastures offered certain facilities for dreaming. But at evening he left his flocks to the care of Essetore and the faithful Olivier, and returned by a short cut to the hacienda. The short cut was a matter of many miles, over a mountain, down a sharp precipice, skirting several waterfalls, crossing a wooded bottom land, and up again; several hours of climbing, dangerous enough after dark. But this Nacio counted as nothing in return for one brief hour of bliss with his Dorotea.

The bliss seemed to consist chiefly in sitting together on the doorstone in the sweet July darkness, the voice a low and steady murmur, punctuated by a soft, empty giggle; with occasional intervals of si-

lence, interrupted periodically by various members of the household assigned to sentry duty; for the matriarch was, when she chose, a ruthless chaperon.

"What in the world," asked Emily of the boy once, "do you find to talk so much about?"—having herself found conversation with their guest well-nigh impossible.

The boy replied blissfully, "When you love, *belle-sœur*, to talk is not necessary." And Emily felt a stab of sympathy. It was true that she and Esteban had wasted very little of their courtship in conversation.

Yet none of those on sentry duty had ever reported to the matriarch any conduct which she would have regarded as unseemly.

"Good heavens," demanded Emily of her husband, "does he never kiss her? Do you suppose the boy makes that long, exhausting climb every evening merely to look at her?" . . . and was reminded by Esteban that he himself had needed to be taught the possibility of kissing between the affianced.

"You were certainly an apt pupil," she commented. "But poor Dotty must be having the surprises of her life!" And, indeed, the girl's habitual blankness of expression began to take on a rather puzzled cast.

Once Emily overheard Nacio's rapt voice mur-

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muring from memory Victor Hugo's immortal verses about the earth-worm who loved a star:

*"Madame, à vos pieds
Dans l'ombre un cœur est là. . . .
Qui se meurt en bas
Quand vous brillez en haut —"*

Into the tranced silence which followed fell her soft little giggle: "My word, Nasho, you do know a lot of poetry! I suppose they teach it at your school."

Emily tried at intervals to open his eyes, and ears; an ungrateful task. How disillusion him, if Dorothy could not do her own disillusioning? True, the soft voice—another charming English heritage—might conceal the vulgarity of her speech from so unaccustomed an ear as Nacio's; and various odd solecisms, at table and otherwise, he put down doubtless to racial differences of custom. But the cheapness of the girl was as obvious as pinchbeck jewelry.

"Certainly she is beautiful, very beautiful," admitted Emily, "but she will not be so always, dear boy."

"You mean she will grow old? Naturally; who does not? We shall grow old together, she and I."

"I don't mean that at all! Beauty has nothing, really, to do with age. Look at your grandmother, for example. She is still a beautiful person, in her way. It is a matter of finish, of impression; perhaps of the bony structure ——"

"But artists value my Dorotea particularly for her bony structure!" protested Nacio eagerly. "She has told me so!" The girl was rather given to discussing the points of her physique, much as a singer likes to discuss the points of his voice.

Emily made a gesture of impatience. "Listen, Nacio! When you have gone to the horse market at Tarbes with your father or *la madre*, have you not sometimes seen for sale quite cheap a pretty little filly, much prettier than the thoroughbreds—long mane and tail, nice little round haunches, glossy skin, and so forth? Yet when you looked close, you saw why she was cheap. Too heavy in the barrel, perhaps, or a certain thickness about the region of the fetlocks ——"

The boy burst out laughing. "Ah, *belle-sœur*, are you trying to tell me that Dorotea has a thickness in the region of the fetlocks? Why, her ankles are slim as ——"

"Don't be an idiot, Nacio! You know quite well what I mean," said Emily crossly. "I am trying to tell you that Dorothy—well, that Dorothy is not

and never will be quite a lady." She paused abruptly, remembering that it was Esteban who had once asked her what was a lady.

But the boy nodded. "She is not *femme du monde*, like you—I know that! But what should I do with a wife who was *femme du monde*, there in the wilds of America—at Esteban's mines, perhaps, or with Hercule Olhaiby, the wine grower? Ah, no, you mean more than that, dear Emilie!" His grave smile reminded her that he was ceasing very rapidly to be a boy. "You wish to tell me that she is not your equal in other ways? Perhaps you are right. I know very little about women. But I am not her judge; I am her lover!"

The simplicity of it silenced Emily, shamed her a little.

Nacio went on quietly, "I think you wish to tell me, perhaps, that she is not quite a good woman. But there you are wrong," he said very earnestly. "I know that you are wrong. Men often do things for which they have shame afterward—you see, I have heard them talk. Even such men as my father, as Esteban. But that does not keep them from being good men, nor from being regarded as good men, as long as they are ashamed afterward, and never do such things again. Why should one be less for-

giving to women than to men? King Arthur was not so; nor our Blessed Lord Jesus."

Emily, somewhat nonplused by this unexpected appearance of the double-standard question, did her best to give candor for candor "I think it is a question of modesty, dear Nacio. Modesty is still demanded of women, just as courage will always be demanded of men. And with reason; it is for the preservation of the race."

"Modesty? But of course! A woman who has lost her modesty is—*tiens*, she has ceased to be a woman!" he said sternly. "But my Dorotea is very modest. Shall I tell you how I know? Because once, when I made a compliment upon her beauty, saying how her bosom was exquisite, showing so beneath the thinness of her dress, she blushed like a sunset and told me I was a very naughty boy, that people did not make such compliments in English. Was not that modesty?" he asked in touching triumph.

Emily gave it up. She could not tell him that a blush might be as often the sign of prurience as of modesty; that at best it was a mere matter of sensitive vascular muscles and a clear skin.

The conversation touched and saddened her, but it left her with an idea. She went to their neighbor with it, as she often went with ideas.

Etcheverray listened soberly. "It is a risk," he

said at last. "He believes in her—in her possibilities. *Eh bien*; if you destroy illusion, what do you put in its place?" She realized that the question came from one who had never found anything to put in its place.

She sighed. "I don't know. But he must take his chances like other men, Des Luynes. He cannot spend his life in the sky pastures."

"Unfortunately, no!" The man sighed also. "Very well. I shall speak to Jaun-Smeet about it."

This American son of Pilar de Maytie, still called "Jaun-Smeet" in the village, although he was rapidly bringing new fame to his mother's name elsewhere, had returned to the valleys that summer to paint his yearly picture for the Salon. Much of his success he credited to the influence of his mother's friend, the Comte des Luynes; so that he accepted any suggestion from that source with alacrity.

"In fact, I was just casting about for a new model," he said, "and if Zubaios uses her, as you say, she ought to be good enough for me."

Emily was able to tell their guest shortly that a young painter in the village had heard of her beauty and wished to paint her, although he was rather shy about asking her for sittings.

"I'll bet he's heard about me," said Dorothy complacently. "There isn't a model on the Rive Gauche

who can hold a pose longer; to say nothing of the flesh tints. . . . Why should he be shy? Zubaños doesn't own me, you know!" she bridled. "It would serve him right to have me sit for a new man!"

Whether she resented the more the Spaniard's attack upon her, or his subsequent indifference to her, Emily could not determine; but the vacant gray eyes lighted with new interest. Perhaps time was beginning to hang a little heavy on her hands while she waited for her lover to arrive at a marriageable age; despite the pleasures of the bathtub.

Nacio was well content with the arrangement; it flattered him that another painter had recognized the beauty of his beloved, and Jaun-Smeet was their friend, their neighbor; a very different person from Zubaños.

"By all means let him paint a picture of you," he said. "When I have money enough, I shall buy it."

"You do not think there is any danger for John himself out of this?" asked Emily of Etcheverray, with some compunction.

He smiled a little sadly. "For John? I wish there were! Ah, no, you yourself spoke a terrible truth when you said of him that he was not a man but an artist. He will be one day a very great artist, I am

afraid; and a very lonely one. His mother," he added quietly, "had a way of leaving people lonely."

The picture progressed quite rapidly, thanks to Dorothy's gifts as a model. John never tired of singing her praises. "Why, the girl's perfection! Not a blemish; not a line in her face, not an idea in her head to interfere with one's own conception of her. She has a talent for inertia that amounts to genius! All you need do is to arrange her in a certain pose, and there she stays indefinitely."

In gratitude to Etcheverray for suggesting her, he allowed his friend to bring young Nacio—at home for some feast day—to see the picture before it was done, although he was not fond of premature private views. Success had given Pilar's son a certain quiet confidence which amounted to indifference; he cared nothing for approval or disapproval, all he asked was to be allowed to work; and his work showed it.

He received them in the room that had been his mother's; now a bare and businesslike studio, shorn of its rose brocades and its Aubusson, about which clung, nevertheless, a faint suggestion of remembered fragrance. John always liked to work in that room.

He pointed out a canvas standing by the north window. "There you are! I call it 'Marriage of

Luzaide and Maïttagorri,' the fabled nuptials of earth and sun which is supposed to have peopled the Pyrenees."

It was a rather curious picture: vague nebulæ of drifting, lifting dawn mists, brightening as they rose, to culminate in a single nude woman's figure, standing with closed eyes and outspread arms of ecstasy, the bright hair floating around her like blown sunlight. One single ray from below an unseen horizon rested upon her, illuminating the exquisite body with a pale and glowing radiance as of some sacred chalice, some holy grail brimming over with mystic light.

"Good, isn't it?" remarked the painter impersonally. "A better nude than Ingres', I think. Of course, there are details still to finish. But I've been working it in as rapidly as possible while I have this model. Pretty lucky, wasn't I? Zubaïos' famous blonde, you know ——"

He paused, aware suddenly of their silence. Neither of his guests was looking at the picture. The boy's face, over which wave after wave of sickening color flowed and ebbed, was buried in his hands; the older man stood with head averted, waiting. Without a word the two turned and left the room together, leaving John staring.

The boy asked one question, hoarsely, "She consented to this of her own free will?"

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Etcheverray inclined his head. "She even offered, *mon fils*. It is a famous torso. People enjoy to do the things they do best."

Emily and the two Urruty men were waiting together in the *salha* when they returned, all wearing the guilty look of conspirators. Their eyes questioned Etcheverray, who nodded imperceptibly.

It was Esteban who spoke, with an air of unconvincing jauntiness: "*A la bonne heure*, brother. my lad. I am just off to Saint-Jean to put my boat, the *Gathid*, into commission. Some friends are at Biarritz—gentlemen who have shown me courtesies in America—and I have invited them to make a little cruise along the coast. Will you help me? Or shall I take a mate out of Ciboure?"

Nacio looked around him nervously. Dorothy was not visible; she had not finished her siesta. "You go soon?"

"At once. As soon as Anatole makes ready the car."

"There will be no women?" To Emily's distress, that sick glance rested upon her in passing with a quite impersonal hostility.

"Not a woman!" Esteban smiled ruefully at his wife, who returned the smile, sighing. It was their first separation; but she knew that there are times when men must be alone. "We go to Norway," he

said—"you have not seen the fjords, I think?—possibly on through the Baltic Sea to Russia."

"It does not matter where we go. I will come," muttered Nacio; but the gray, drawn misery of his look had lightened perceptibly.

In the end, it proved surprisingly to be Dorothy who engaged Emily's sympathies, rather more than Nacio. The girl was a good loser. For several days she awaited the return of her lover with the puzzled expression deepening in her large, lambent gaze; but asked no questions. Women of her sort learn young the futility of asking questions.

At last Emily thought it best to break to her the news that Nacio was not returning. The eyes widened.

"Well, of all things! Why ever not?"

Emily murmured something vague about the fickleness of men.

"They're all of that," said the other simply. "But not Nasho. He's different, somehow. I'd never have thought he'd be the sort to let a girl down like this."

She accepted without unnecessary demur certain moneys intended to soothe her injured affections, and murmured that she'd be going on, then.

"Going on where?" asked Emily, although she had not intended to ask. "Not back to Zubaños?"

"Why ever not? Where else would I go?"

Emily murmured something tentative about speaking to the English consul, using certain influences, finding some congenial work for her in a shop, perhaps. Something of the sort —

Dorothy smiled a wide, unhappy smile, and advised her reassuringly to stow it. Work in a shop? Oh, no, things had not reached quite such a pass as that! "Zubaños will be glad enough to have me back at any time; he told that gentleman so, your Mr. Etcheverray. You see, Zubaños needs my hair for his Magdalene."

Emily gave up the uncongenial rôle of reformer. "To say nothing of the flesh tints?" she murmured.

The other nodded, complacently enough; perhaps she consoled herself further with thoughts of her bony structure. And when she saw the automobile in which her hostess was returning her to Zubaños' village, by the long way round, she gave a wriggle of satisfaction. "The longer the better," she murmured. "My word, won't the old boy be bucked to see me returning in such style!"

At the moment of parting, however, the puzzled look returned to her. "I say, whatever put him off me?" she asked, quite suddenly. "Nasho, I mean.

Do you know? Because *I* don't, though I've thought and thought. Why, I've been acting, ever since I've been here, as if I was in church! I'm not such a bad sort, either; don't drink, don't play the giddy goat like some, don't make a hog of myself about the money. If Nasho'd married me, I'd have gone straight as anybody"—only she called it "strite."

"I'm sure you would," murmured Emily, guiltily.

"It wasn't as if he didn't know about me, neither," went on the aggrieved and musical voice. "I never lied to Nasho, excepting just at first. Nobody wouldn't of expected a girl to tell him everything about herself first off! Now would they?"

"No, indeed," said the other. "Nobody would have expected that."

"Well, then, what's it all about, anyhow?"

Emily, thus appealed to, tried in halting explanation the theory of Peer Gynt; that man's nature is like an onion, from which layer after layer may be peeled before reaching its true core.

"Must be pretty small by that time," commented Dorothy, with her soft, high giggle. "And if Nasho's heart is anything like an onion, not taking any, thanks! Never could abide onions myself. . . . Well, I'll be going on. Home, James!" she remarked elegantly to the chauffeur Anatole. "Cheerio, Mrs. Urruty!"

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“Cheerio, Dotty, my dear,” said Emily, with some heartiness.

As she reëntered the house she noted a vaguely familiar something floating in the water butt; a green, pulpy, dissolving mass, which certainly did not belong there. She fished it out with the aid of a stick. It was her girlhood’s copy of the *Idylls of the King*.

THE FAUN





II

THE FAUN

It so happened that Nacio Urruty, having attained the climax of his chosen career at an age when many young men are content to begin it, found himself chagrined and not a little dismayed by the distinction. As if a mere bit of silver inserted into the body in place of bone were sufficient to incapacitate for further services to his country a valid man, who was at the same time Basque and Urruty! No mere veteran's pension at twenty-two, no *Croix de Guerre*

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to be displayed on every possible occasion by his fatuous mother, nor even the unprecedented consideration shown him latterly by his father and elder brother Esteban, both not undistinguished veterans of French wars, sufficed to atone to Nacio for the all-too-brief pride in his ace's uniform, the odd supermastery of life which comes to those intrepid navigators who attempt habitually the conquest of the uncharted ether.

Indeed, this new attitude of respect on the part of his betters gave the boy a quite acute discomfort. He no longer nourished the ambition to master his brother Esteban at the pelota, which Urruty men practice among themselves not in modern *rebot* fashion with a protective wicker glove, but according to the sterner tradition of the *blaid*, receiving and returning the vicious little rubber cannon-ball with the bare hand. Since Esteban had remained so far undefeated at this virile pastime, even by professionals such as Chiquito de Cambo, young Nacio found himself with a sentimental, almost a womanish content that his silver rib would forever prevent him from eclipsing his brother's reputation; an eventuality for which their mutual instructor, the village blacksmith, had long been openly touting him.

Nor had even a day with hounds, in the English

fashion, any longer its proper thrill for Nacio. Like many farmers of the Basses Pyrenees, the Urruty kept a good pack of beagles, and had lately imported a number of Irish hunters, since native horses of the Spanish-Arab strain are better for speed than for jumping. But while there were plenty of game little red foxes to be found in the valleys, and while Anglophile Nacio loved above all things a hard day's riding to the music of the pack, there had lately come upon him an unmanly and most un-British distaste for the moment when quarry is run to earth and puts up its hopeless little snarling moment of defense. This weakness he would have died rather than confess. But his sister Bette, whose instinctive knowledge of the sex had been increased by marriage, and the recent birth of male twins, to a point almost uncanny, said to him one day: "Why do you waste time, brother, hunting in the English manner, now that it is the season for the *chasse aux palombes*? Wild pigeon makes such a pleasant addition to the pot, *n'est-ce-pas*?—whereas when you catch a fox—*tiens!* what have you?"—Nothing if not practical, was young Bette.

Nacio seized excuse thereafter to absent himself with gun and dog from more strenuous sporting activities, since pigeons at least do not attempt any

piteous efforts at self-defense; and so renewed acquaintance with things it is well for a man to remember—silence, solitude, peace. Indeed, it was almost as good as boyhood days with the sheep in the high pastures, where there was nothing to disturb except the chances of wind and weather and wild beasts.

Nacio had not lost as yet any of his boyish beauty—that fresh-budded virility which at its brief best outshines any beauty of women. Long months in a Tangier hospital had merely paled a little the warmth of his clear brown skin, and put a certain edge onto his jutting Basque profile, and darkened slightly the resilient hair that persisted, despite determined efforts with pomade, in springing into vigorous brown ringlets about his head. “All curled up and nowhere to go,” his American sister-in-law was wont to say of it, commiseratingly. She was very fond of this big, shy little-brother of hers; and whom Emily loved she chastened. * * * Only the eyes of him had changed; those gray-green north-Spanish eyes which are the most expressive in the world, and which had looked upon strange things since his family stood silently together to watch the last glimpse of his battle-plane winging over to Africa at the tail of an *escadrille* sent to do police work among the turbulent Riffs.

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Of these things Nacio never spoke, after the custom of soldiers who have seen such service; only people who looked into those wary, troubled young eyes knew, somehow, and were sorry, and spoke to the boy with unconscious gentleness—even his redoubtable grandmother, hardy matriarch though she was of a hardy clan.

“What ails the *doguin* now,” she remarked, in one of the family conclaves not infrequent among the Urruty, “is merely, one comprehends, a touch of *cafard* natural to the temperament. Our Nacio has gained, like most persons who do too much thinking with the head, a certain timidity of life.”

“Timidity!” indignantly exclaimed his mother, Fancine, a lady far too fat and indolent to take usually any part in controversy, especially with her redoubtable mother-in-law. “How is it, *madame belle-mère*, that invariably you wish so to belittle my son, *hein*? He will, perhaps, never succeed in discovering mines of oil, or copper, or whatever accident it was that makes your favorite, ‘Steban, rich as a Jew, nor will he have the good fortune, perhaps, to marry himself with a fine American wife who has no dot—for me, my dot was of a size to make the appearance less important,” she added, modestly bridling. “But to his country our Nacio is a hero, no less!” And she reminded them, at length, of a

feat of which they needed no reminding, a feat which had indeed received its share of attention from the world's press: when the boy, wounded, his plane disabled by bullets from a treacherous Riff village, had managed to steer its gradual descent directly into the center of the small cactus-hidden settlement, turning loose both bombs and machine-gun as he fell; so that his *escadrille*, wheeling to the rescue, found what was left standing of the mud-and-palm-leaf huts already in flames, and Nacio, unconscious beneath the wreck of his burning plane, apparently the only living survivor.

"It is not every man," sniffed Madame Fancine, beginning to weep with sheer pride, "who alone and single-handed annihilates a complete village of the enemy! Was that, I ask you, an example of *cafard*?"

"Of the worst type," quietly replied her husband. "Panic translated into instinctive action, for which France does well to honor our son, my dear! But—it is probable there were in that Riff village women living, even children; which, no doubt, the boy finds difficult to forget."

Esteban nodded briefly, without comment. He too had seen his share of military service with the Army of Africa.

For the first time in family history, however, Madame Urruty took occasion to support her em-

battled daughter-in-law. "Stuff and foolishness," she remarked, in the French equivalent. "Women are no different from other enemies in a time of war. Do you forget that our own Basque wives have frequently fought beside their men, expecting no quarter? As for children, they must take their chance with the rest; when our female ancestors feared to be made slaves by the Romans, they seized their young by the hand and jumped down the cliffs with them."

"Which did not make war any pleasanter, I dare say, for the Roman soldiery!" murmured her son Pedro. "And these Berbers of the Riff, my mother, are in a manner of speaking our own cousins, being of the ancient stock, a fighting free mountain folk, like ourselves."

"All the more need that Nacio sell his life as dearly as possible! Do you fancy," asked his mother, drily, "that those savage female relatives of ours would have remembered any historical cousinship, once they got the boy within reach of their whetted knives? *No seas pasta*, Pedro!" she added, in the stern Spanish phrase which exhorts a man against undue softness of nature. "What your son needs now is wider experience of women, that he may cease to regard us as a sex apart. A sex apart!—*et puis?* I ask myself!"

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American Emily chuckled audibly; the reactions of her candid Basque grandmother-in-law never failing to supply her with amused respect.

"You mean, *belle-maman*, that the time arrives for our Nacio to marry himself a wife?" questioned Madame Fancine, mollified by so unexpected a reinforcement.

"On the contrary. I spoke," briefly replied the matriarch, "of experience, not marriage, my girl. One is not at all certain that the time will ever arrive for our Nacio to take himself a wife!"

"Meaning," the intrigued Emily could not resist inquiring, "that one woman is hardly enough to constitute experience?"

"As to that, I do not find myself qualified to judge; you might ask your husband, there," retorted the old lady, indicating Esteban; who replied imperturbably that much depended upon the woman, reminding his grandmother that young Nacio had already suffered a certain baptism of fire so far as the other sex was concerned.

"You mean that *cabotine* of Zubaiños the painter, whom the boy tried to make respectable? *Je m'en fiche!*" she dismissed her with a snap of the fingers; Madame Urruty was not one to mince her words. "What youth of palate would remember such a *bêtise* except with a wrinkle of the nostril? When I

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say women, I mean women, *mon fils!*—such as your Emily there, such as our own Pilar de Maytie, God rest her soul!—if she had one. Women who, serving no other purpose, at least provide a certain material for romance.”

“Why, *madre!*” laughed Esteban’s wife, blushing as she rarely blushed over compliments from other sources.

“It is such as those,” finished the old lady, sagely, “who sometimes cure fools like Nacio of their puppy foolishness—and sometimes not. *Nous verrons!*”

However, although the valleys were prolific enough of fresh-cheeked, modest, sturdy young Basquaises who would have been glad enough of notice from Nacio Urruty, there was a notable scarcity among them of sirens of the peculiar quality of the late Madame de Maytie; or of that adventurous lady, now the more than contented wife of Esteban Urruty, known formerly to the cosmopolitan press as “the beautiful Miss Weldon of Kentucky.” . . .

Winter was long that year; and when Spring came again to the valleys, babbling down the slopes with the voice of released small waters, waking each day with a louder and louder orchestral prelude, the *etcheonda* seemed suddenly to Nacio like a cage from which escape was imperative. Doctors, there at the Tangier hospital, had commanded a year’s inactivity

—rather liberally translated by the Urruty family, who were unaccustomed to invalids in their midst. But what was the breaking of a colt, the occasional plowing of a field, to a Basque youth with the spring of the year in his blood? In vain the disgruntled hero begged for his old occupation as guardian of the family flocks and herds. That post was now the inalienable property of Essetore, once his shepherd boy; even as his great Briard sheep-dog, Olivier, sobered with years and importance, had in course of natural progression succeeded his father Nagarro as guardian of the *hacienda*, now that Nagarro lay at his long rest beside the gates, where still the memory of his doughty deeds made evil-doers such as gypsies and cagots to hurry by without lingering.

“*Ça marche*,” said Nacio to himself, rather bitterly; thinking of life, which seemed to be going on very well without him. “And me, what is my share of it?”—since it is Spring, not Autumn, which is the true season of *weltschmerz*, of a vague expectant despair.

The house seemed strange to him without Nagarro; without the *aiëta anna*, old Damasa, who no longer whispered her tales of witches and devils in the chimney nook; without his adoring sister Bette, who lived, it is true, almost within eye-shot at L’Ey Kahatcia, but so preoccupied with all the men she

had married—her artist husband, John de Maytie; his adopted father, the savant Etcheverray; a pair of exacting male twins which were at present rather overfilling the family cradle—as to be no longer quite, as hitherto, at Nacio's careless beck and call.

Indeed, what with the new respect granted his decoration and his silver rib, the village itself seemed strange to Nacio. Lastra, the cobbler; Hermose, who mended umbrellas from house to house and was purveyor of all neighborhood gossip; even Olhaiby the blacksmith, now training the fourth generation of Urruty for the pelota field in the person of Esteban's small son Wally—all treated the discomfited ex-warrior with the same alarming new courtesy, rare indeed among peasants of that neighborhood, who were in the habit of dealing with their pastors and masters strictly as man to man. Nacio came at last to the conclusion that part of this disconcerting formality must be due to the mustache which he had lately managed to acquire, in defiance of Basque custom, and of which he was far too proud to care to remove it.

His grandmother had from the first viewed this virile adornment with some displeasure. "For what reason," she demanded, "does a young man of the Eskualdunak, whose mouth is not a deformity, so dis-

figure himself as to grow on the face a supplementary eyebrow? I mock myself of it!"

"In order," explained matronly Bette, who knew such things by instinct, "to show what was possible, gran'mère? Nacio did not fancy, perhaps, the sobriquet given by his fellow officers of '*Le Pucelet*.'"

"*Tais-toi*, monkey-flower!" muttered her brother, blushing. "Since when do you become a chatterbox?"

But their ancestor had heard and remarked, frowning: "'*Le Pucelet*,' eh? And why 'the maiden,' my son?" She eyed, rather puzzled, this youngest of her adult male offspring, him of the powerful shoulders, the hands whose strength he did not realize, the wide brows and squared salience of jaw tagged by anthropologists as 'mental prominence.' "You have at least nothing of maidenhood in your appearance!"

Emily, overhearing, thought that if life down among men had earned son of hers no worse nickname than "*le Pucelet*," she would be rather proud. Aloud she explained, teasing as usual, "It is because of his pretty curling locks, you see." For which Madame Urruty tartly recommended goose-grease. "*Le Pucelet*," indeed! The appellation seemed to rankle.

It was this unfortunate nickname, in fact, which kept Madame Urruty from joining the chorus of family protest against Nacio's ambition presently to

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put into condition again Esteban's old biplane, the *Oie Blanche*, which, having made history in the family, was now enjoying a life of honorable desuetude in its hangar in the mule-pasture. Emily and Esteban had soon tired of air-voyaging, being too happily absorbed in affairs of earth.

Esteban, indeed, was reluctant to let Nacio tempt fate further. "The good little craft is old now, as such things go," warned he. "It has seen its usefulness."

But their grandmother stoutly encouraged Nacio's returning energy.

"*C'est son apostolat*. A man enjoys to do that which he knows best to do. As for me," she added, calmly, "when the *doguin* has all prepared, I shall make with him my first flight into the atmosphere. One grows no younger; if one is ever to fly in the flesh, *il faut commencer*. And since when, 'Steban, do we of our family regard mere age as a disability? Our customs, our dwellings, even our animals, serve out with us their full time. *Tiens!* at this rate you will soon be demanding, perhaps, a new grandmother?"

"At this rate," remarked her favorite, patting her shoulder encouragingly, "we shall soon be needing one, if you persist in taking to the air with Nacio!"

Nevertheless, it was not in the company of his

valued ancestor that the boy at last launched the rehabilitated *White Goose* upon new adventure. The sput-sput-sputter of the ascending plane was her first warning that he was off again, and Madame Urruty sighed over it, a little testily. "Now I shall have to put that worthless do-nothing into my prayers again!" she complained; having attained the years when a woman likes to have as many as possible of her family sitting about the hearth fire of an evening.

The steady roar of an engine about him once more was as good to Nacio as the grip of a horse between the knees; better, since it gave him that sense of isolation, of high detachment from affairs of earth which to natures of his type is sheer necessity. Son of calm heights, accustomed to solitudes and altitudes, the too near presence of men and their affairs was distress and confusion to him. Laxarrou, ancient god of the high places, had long since marked out Nacio for his own; and as Anna Damasa had freely warned him, whom the ancient gods claim must ever after heed their calling.

Cruising the air currents above familiar and less familiar valleys, in circles ever widening, Nacio noted directly beneath him presently, with a shrug for the folly of human planning, the high cuplike meadow known as the Val Caché, that secret refuge of the inner Pyrenees into which, since the time of

Charlemagne, since the passing perhaps of the armies of Hannibal, Basques at the first sign of enemy invasion have driven the pick of their flocks and herds, together with all very young boys, all nursing or pregnant mothers, and certain of those vigorous old women whose wisdom has ever proven of value to the race; not the old men, since Basque men do not grow too old for war's necessity, nor the young women, who are often useful enough in the fighting-line—he recalled, indeed, a certain company of Basque women who during a siege of Bayonne, when ammunition failed, had invented the bayonet for their necessities by affixing table forks to their gun muzzles. Young Nacio, hovering directly above the legendary Val Caché, whose carefully concealed entrance is known to only a few titular heads of families such as his own, amused himself disrespectfully with thoughts of what damage his own doughty grandparent might yet effect with a fork affixed to her gun muzzle.

Then he sighed, realizing that the value of their legendary race-sanctuary, together with its need, perhaps, was become a thing of the past. Modern war-invention, he thought, was making of war itself a thing of the past—his mind reverting to certain results of war-invention which did not bear too much thinking of. A certain young Riff woman, for ex-

ample, who in his dreams he sometimes saw crawling out of her fallen hut, snarling up at his machine-gun like a wolf, knife in hand. * * * Another, a bent old creature with her arms full of young, running frantically away into the cactus, falling, stumbling on again, falling; until the last of his bombs mercifully obliterated all together. * * * Nacio shook his head sharply, as a swimmer does to get the water out of his ears, and deliberately emptied his mind of such memories as a soldier must.

Still farther inland, among less familiar southward valleys, his attention was caught by something new in a region where novelty surprised him. Something new in Andorra?—for he recognized that remote landscape of perpendicular fields, of ancient gray villages which resemble as much as possible the rocks upon which, and of which, they are built, in striking contrast with the bright coloring of Basque neighborhoods. A curiously empty countryside, Andorra; its unwarlike Catalan population, meek as the sheep and cattle they herd, crowding close together in hamlets for mutual support and company, lacking utterly the fierce Basque passion for independence.

Yet here, in the shadow of the lofty and sinister Puig d'Andar, where no new generation aspires to build houses of its own but is glad enough of the stout flint-boulder walls of its forebears, appeared a

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frivolous little foreign villa of painted wood, gay with exotic awnings and flower borders, tucked away behind one of those ancient crumbling watch-towers, called *dorrea*, which have given the small republic its name, and just above that town designated rather obviously as Andorra-the-Old. On its terrace two figures were moving—a young woman and a child, whose uncovered heads caught the sun in a gleam as of molten amber. He saw that they were dancing, stepping and curtsying prettily to each other, with skirts held out. It was good to him just then to see woman-creatures dancing. He dropped closer to investigate.

Never, despite earlier disillusion, had Nacio quite recovered from his racial weakness for fair hair. He still possessed, among his dearest treasures, a long blond English tress culled from a head that had proved unworthy—"Oh, golden head with which I used to play, not knowing." . . .

The swooping plane, so close above, attracted the young woman's attention, who, looking up, suddenly held out beseeching arms. It was a gesture such as chained Andromeda on her rock might have made to the passing Perseus.

Nacio's heart underwent a pleasant little premonitory thrill. Below the town at the foot of the crag stretched a level meadow beside a poplar-feathered

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stream; the perfect landing-field, not always easy to find in mountain countries.

"Why not?" he said to himself; and as if to humor his mood, the engine of the *White Goose* began obligingly to miss.

Since the rapidly assembling population of Andorra-la-Viella seemed too awestruck by this visitation from the skies to answer questions, Nacio commended his plane to Saint Christopher, the never-failing friend to voyagers in any element, and went up into the town to seek information.

But information is not too easily come by in Andorra-la-Viella. Of the two provosts, Spanish and French, who conduct between them its temporal affairs, one was making siesta and could not naturally be disturbed, the other had taken his wares to market in the next parish, where a hog-fair was in progress. The Syndic's official residence, or *mairie*, distinguished by archaic representations from the Bible done in ocher upon its tall façade, echoed emptily to Nacio's demand; doubtless His Excellency was also taking pigs to market, since swine are a specialty of the district as with many communities of Spanish affiliation. Indeed, the Spanish dislike of Jews and natural congeniality with Irish may have something to do with racial attitudes toward the humble pork animal.

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The shops themselves appeared to be deep in siesta. Had he arrived, wondered Nacio, rather intrigued by the idea, at the Bois Dormant, home of the Sleeping Beauty, in person?

Meeting no one, he pursued investigations along a crooked narrow lane of muddy paving-stones, which is the capital's chief thoroughfare, scattering before him as he went a large concourse of cats, who disappeared stealthily each into the neat round hole prepared for it in its own house door. Their numbers and the smug fatness of them shocked Nacio, until he remembered that Andorra is by way of being the granary of all countries thereabout, and that where grain is, there also will be rats. After which he felt less distaste for the company of the sinister sleek beasts, regarded by Basques as the devil's representatives in a Christian household. He even greeted them respectfully, in passing: "*Mes compliments, messieurs-mesdames! et bon appétit.*"

The street ended at the Casa del Vall, Andorra's statehouse, in and out of whose hive-shaped watch-tower pigeons pursued their candid amours undisturbed. Over the door-arch, with the date of its late restoration in 1588, were emblazoned the arms of Andorra's three traditional defenders: The cross and mitre of the Spanish Bishopric of Urgel; the aristocratic escutcheon of the French house of Foix; and,

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more appropriately, the emblem of pastoral Béarn, a pair of cows—for very obviously cattle occupied, when at home, the lower floor of Andorra's state-house. Above, in pursuit of a low droning sound which caught his ear, Nacio passed through an empty council chamber, against whose walls hung the twenty-six gowns and tricorne hats of the Comu, Andorra's legislature. There was also a modest chest containing the archives of that oldest and smallest of the world's republics, locked by six keys, each in the possession of one of its six parishes.

Such is the capital of a country surrounded by ever-warring nations, which has kept itself free from war for seven centuries by the simple expedient of possessing nothing to excite neighboring cupidity—a country without railroad, newspaper, or printing-press, having neither customs duty, nor currency, nor postage of its own, communicating with the world outside by some ten miles or so of roadway out of Spain suitable for vehicles, and by two high passes out of France negotiable only on foot or muleback. An atmosphere of inviolable peace exists, not without its touch of melancholy; the true philosophy of negation. Hardly a country, thought the young Basque, puzzled, for foreigner *hibernateurs* to select as a winter residence.

The last door he opened revealed the cause of

the humming sound he had pursued. It was obviously a schoolroom, the ancient frescoes on its walls defaced by the scrapings and scribblings common to restless youth of all nations, a diapason of question and answer swelling and diminishing in Oriental fashion between pupils and teacher.

The latter looked at Nacio a moment, and the eyes behind his horn spectacles brightened. "*Mira!* At last," he said, surprisingly. "Your friends, señor, have been long awaiting your arrival! I must send word at once to the house on the *tuc*, as I have promised. How the Americans will rejoice!"

"So, they are Americans up there?"—Nacio had suspected it from the frivolous and ephemeral look of their little villa, rather like the advertisements in his sister-in-law's American magazines of houses that come in sections ready to be put up on the spot.

The teacher looked a little blank. "Pardon? You are not, then, he whom they expect?"

Nacio explained that he had paused at Andorra, in passing, only through curiosity.

"As well you might, as well you might!" murmured the teacher. "Others than yourself have felt curiosity, señor!—although since the Prince Bishop chooses to ignore their presence, and the Syndic himself has sold them land, there can, of course, be nothing that should not be!" He eyed his visitor

with sudden anxiety; but Nacio's frank and open countenance reassured him—here was no secret agent of police. "The foreigners," he added, more easily, "suffer, no doubt, from a certain loneliness for their countrymen; that is why they watch with eagerness for the arrival of strangers; the man, in fact, offers a *duro* to the first child who shall inform him of any who arrive among us, speaking the English. On such occasion he mingles with the rest of us, dressed like any peasant from the hills, listening to the English conversation, but taking no part in it—which seems a little strange, no?"

Nacio nodded, smiling; not to talk must indeed seem strange to any Catalan. "He receives few visitors, then?"

"There are not many to receive, señor!" The other spoke with an air as of apology. "He keeps a vicious young she-dog who gives warning of all approach; also, one hears, he has a telescope there in the old watch-tower, which commands a view of the town and the entire valley. And once the Syndic himself"—here the teacher's loquacity lowered to a confidential note—"mounting the path on some neighborly errand, heard without warning a shot go whistling above his head. The señora apologized, explained that her husband that day was shooting at buzzards, plentiful enough thereabouts because of many dead

animals which are thrown into the precipice below. But—unexpected visiting is not encouraged, apparently, there on the *tuc*.”

“And the lady herself, she is equally unfriendly?”

The teacher’s face changed, softened. “Ah, that one! No, señor, she is different. Time was when she came in person down to market, having no servant except a half-wit fellow who cannot be trusted to make good bargains. Though she herself does not too well at bargaining! You should hear her, señor, laughing because she could not remember the difference between a *duro* and a *real*!” The pedagogue sighed, only too well aware himself of the difference between penny and dollar. “It is a laugh, señor, like the trill of a nesting bird—or was so. Now we less often hear it. * * * Even to mass she came sometimes, staring about as if all were strange and new. And she had for this one a pretty word, for that a smile, for some child or old person the flower out of her breast—for me quite often an invitation to eat with them, in the foreign fashion, and to hear the American *fonografa*. Such music as it plays!—strange, heathen, dangerous perhaps to the soul, as the Syndic says.” The school-teacher fell silent, his plain, dull face touched for the moment by the spell of remembered beauty. “However, all that is past; she has changed greatly during two winters here; she

too becomes aloof and silent, like the man. Andorran winters, señor, are hard on women. Because of the loneliness."

"You seem," commented Nacio severely, "to be not very good neighbors, here in Andorra!"

The other hesitated, his garrulousness becoming almost inaudible with discretion. "But it is thought, you comprehend, that the *americanos* have reasons for preferring loneliness! It is said they are not perhaps even married, in a proper Christian manner—since the man resembles an *amante* in behavior, rather than a husband; doing her pleasure, sharing the child's care, even assisting with household tasks. Picture to yourself a man of our mountains, *cap-de-casa* of his own establishment, with a broom in the hand! And coming so rarely to the mass. I will not deny that it gives scandal. But for myself, I cannot believe that one so fair as the *extranjera* can be living in sin—she has a look too unhappy," added the enamored pedagogue, innocently. "No, no!—I believe it is entirely from jealousy that the man does not encourage neighborly visiting. Others than myself may have looked with too much pleasure upon that lady—His Excellency the French provost, for example; the Syndic himself, who makes many little reasons for calling upon his neighbors of the *tuc*. Naturally a husband prefers to keep such charms

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for his own eyes, as is his right.—Therefore,” he finished, observing that his visitor grew restive under such a spate of information, “I should indeed think twice, señor, before visiting out of mere curiosity the house of our Americans.”

The young man lost, naturally, as little time as possible in completing an adventure thus attractively difficult. He climbed the steep foot-path along the *tuc* with rapid ease, albeit cautiously, feeling small alarm where the dog was concerned—no animal remained long a stranger to Nacio—but wondering whether his prospective host was likely that day to be shooting at buzzards. Partly by way of reassurance to unseen watchers above, and partly inspired by certain strains of Debussy that came floating rather surprisingly down to him as he climbed—strange music indeed to encounter in the shadow of the Puig d’Andar!—Nacio took out of pocket his old shepherd’s *chirilion* which had been with him through many wanderings and improvised an accompanying harmony, just such an airy threnody of sound as the master may have been fancying when he wrote his immortal revery of a faun. It was music that suited well the high golden weather of that dreaming day, and a woman came to the door of her house and stood gazing out with vague expectancy.

Her eyes widened at the apparition of a singu-

larly beautiful youth in an aviator's helmet, which might have belonged to Perseus or Mercury or any one of the younger gods, a pipe of Pan at his lips, her child and the savage she-dog following at his heels in tranced submission.

"My word!" she said to herself, aloud, after the fashion of those who are too much alone. "I seem to have materialized the Faun in person! And speaking English," she added, startled, as Nacio doffed his god's helmet to wish her a courteous good day.

"I regret, madame, that I am not one of the Americans whom you have been expecting," said Nacio, in his most careful Oxford speech.

Her widening eyes filled disconcertingly with tears. "Thank God for that!" she breathed, and called aloud. "Oh Ned, Ned, darling, come here—it's all right. Just a sort of *deus ex machina*, dropped out of the skies!—French, I think; or is it Spanish?"

"Neither. Basque, Madame," said the god out of the machine; and added, simply, "It was I to whom you held up your two hands." There was a grave gentleness about the youth which rarely failed to reassure.

Nacio was no more given than any of his race to asking questions; he found them, in fact, rarely necessary, being of those unfortunates in whom the gift of imagination closely approximates clairvoyance. He

came away from his visit to the exotic little foreign dwelling in better possession of facts concerning it than he cared to be. Here was no gallant adventure, such as his fellow officers of the flying service had been wont to exchange over the evening camp fire, Nacio contributing rather less than his fair share. The woman was not so young as she had looked from above; quite old, in fact; she must, thought Nacio, be nearing thirty. Nor did she prove quite so lovely as the gleam of the amber hair had led one to expect; except perhaps in the eyes of a painter such as his artist brother-in-law, John de Maytie, who would have found the faint shadows between her eyes, and the slight droop of her wistful lips, rather more beautiful than beauty. But Nacio was not as yet so subtle in his tastes; he liked his ladies with the bloom on them.

True, her frequent laughter had the charm of the schoolmaster's rapt description; yet somehow it hurt an oversensitive ear more than it pleased.—*Le courage de rire*, Nacio commented to himself, uncomfortably; there seemed more of nervousness in it than of gayety. And the eyes, even when she laughed, look a little frightened. Nacio frowned at the realization; something within him could no longer bear that a woman's eyes should look frightened.

Nor had the man with her any semblance of the

jealous lover village fancy had pictured; he was obviously a husband, and of that complaisant Anglo-Saxon type which always surprises Europeans, quite content to leave his women alone in the company of strange young men. He was obviously older than his wife, the intellectual rather than the commercial type of American, tall but stooping, with a body which no longer seemed quite to fit him, hung on him loosely as if the person within had somehow shrunk. Although his manner was amiable enough, he had a disconcerting habit of falling into a blank stare while others talked—took, in fact, no further interest in his visitor once he learned that Nacio could tell him nothing about present stock-market conditions in New York. The young Basque, indeed, did not entirely understand his question; believed him to be speaking of cattle, and explained simply that his father usually arranged to sell their own livestock in the nearer market at Tarbes.

At this the woman laughed, her pretty birdlike trill of laughter more spontaneous than before, and presently had Nacio telling her details of life in the Basque valleys; the serene ordered existence of the Urruty hacienda; his year alone with the sheep which had given so much time for thought and reflection; his college days among the quiet priests at Toulouse; his very different later experience of

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French army service in Africa—this with reservations. Once she commented, "You must have had nice sisters!"—listening to his description of them; of Bette, his favorite, "born a mother," he explained, "to everything that lives"; of his brother's American wife, Emily, who regarded her sturdy Basque children with such detached yet proud devotion.

"The oldest near my baby's age—what playmates for Mariflor!" sighed the other mother. "English-speaking, English-smelling children—not these wretched little Andorrans who get sewed up in their clothes for the winter, poor lambs. If only we had happened to discover your valley of the Pyrenees, instead of this one!"

"Why not come," suggested Nacio, politely, living up to hospitable traditions, "and discover us still, madame? I think you would not hear much English except in my brother's part of the house; but Basques are a cleaner people, perhaps, than Andorrans."

She looked at her husband with sudden questioning; but since he said nothing, shook her head. "No, no; it is too late. This is our home now; I suppose," she added, rather poignantly, "it will always be our home!"

She showed him, sensing his interest, over the odd little house, which she called a "bungalow." Everything in it, she explained, was quite American—beds

which let down unexpectedly out of doors, an "efficiency kitchenet" somewhat smaller than his grandmother's pot-cupboard, chairs which began to rock disconcertingly when one sat upon them.

"We have turned 'spread eagle,' you see, instead of going native, as exiles so often do. It helps us to feel—not quite such exiles."

She bit her lip and paused, as if at an indiscretion, again glancing at her husband. But that apathetic man was silently winding up the phonograph as his sole contribution to the occasion, and presently went away as if no guest were there.

The wife apologized. "Do forgive him; he's rather out of the habit of receiving company. In fact, there's nobody to receive, except a very talkative school-teacher, the parish priest, the two provosts—a few dull folk like that, poor dears! They mean kindly, no doubt, and I suppose we really ought to be more friendly with our neighbors, but—it's difficult for a man of his class, of course—a college-bred gentleman—to adapt himself to the point of view of ignorant peasants!"

The young Basque looked at her thoughtfully. In a democracy like America, he commented, people seemed to concern themselves greatly with matters of class—why was this? "Our Emilie, I remember, was at first like that also; as if life were a species of

railroad carriage, where those holding tickets for one class are forbidden to seat themselves in another—although even in a railroad train those buying seats for the first-class carriages may sit where they choose.—As my brother's wife has learned; for now she makes friends throughout our valleys, some to whom she goes for counsel, some who come to her. Women of a community," he added, simply, "have much the same problems, have they not?—how best to conduct the *ménage*, their men, their children."

She flushed as at a rebuke. "Are you accusing me, I wonder, of being a snob?"

He looked puzzled. "'Snob'—that is to me a new word. My English, madame, is perhaps less good than appears," he confessed. "But all natives of Andorra are not ignorant. Peasants, perhaps, yes—*paesanos*, tillers of the soil; even as with us; people whose first duty and care is for the soil. Nevertheless, one has here—as with us—many *pagés*, persons of education, who interest themselves in science, in literature, in *politique du monde*. There is among the *paesanos* a certain aristocracy, you comprehend—as in America," he added, innocently, "there is even an aristocracy of shopkeepers, *n'est-ce-pas*? The thing in which any people excel forms always in time its aristocracy."

The American woman said, meekly: "I dare say

you're right. You see"—her smile was rather rueful—— "none of your *pagés* here have so far interested themselves in us!"

"And will not, perhaps," he returned, also faintly smiling, "so long as your husband indulges himself in—buzzard-shooting."

"So you have heard of that? But have you also heard," she retorted, with some spirit, "why the Syndic of this pious republic is no longer very welcome at our house? There was rather too much of him!—trying to tell us, for instance, how many of our own trees we should be allowed to cut!—Americans aren't accustomed to that sort of interference."

"Possibly in America there is less need of arresting landslips," he suggested, "it being a country not quite so perpendicular.—In our own valley, my father sees to it that for one tree cut, two others are planted."

"Oh!" she said, rather uncertainly. "But that wasn't all!—Does your father inform strangers that unless they come more regularly to church (we do not, ourselves, happen to be of the Syndic's creed) they will find their welcome less cordial in the neighborhood; they may even have difficulty in buying foodstuffs?"

Nacio frowned. "*Monsieur le Syndic* seems over-devout for one who is not a priest!"

"A devoutness left over, I should say, from the Spanish Inquisition!—That is why we have to import most of our food in tins."

The Basque's frown deepened. He wondered what his father the *alcalde*, his dictatorial grandmother, good Père Márcós, *curé* of their parish, would say to such a misuse of authority. These unwarlike Catalans were perhaps less gentle than appeared.

"The superiors of *Monsieur le Syndic* cannot know of this. I myself," he added, quietly, "will speak to the Prince Bishop of the Andorran diocese, who is my friend."

She caught at his arm in sharp anxiety. "No, no! please! My husband should, of course, have been more patient; he is getting very irascible; it troubles me. Just nerves, you know!—But the less attention that is called to our presence here the better. So far we have been safe here, safe and—and forgotten. If I could explain ——"

"But to explain is inutile," interrupted Nacio, with quick impersonal politeness. "*C'n'est pas mon affaire, madame ——*" And he went away, soberly meditating the word "safe" in connection with that flimsy little habitation set beneath the stark, looming mass of the Puig d'Andar, surrounded by the prejudices of ignorant peasant bigotry, threatened further by some undefined impending peril from without.

He was glad that he should probably never see these unfortunates again, that he did not, in fact, know so much as their name, since, on giving his own, the woman had replied only that hers was Rosemary ——

“For remembrance!” Nacio had finished, gallantly, observing that she hesitated to complete the name. The woman exclaimed with pleasure over his acquaintance with English classics. “You *are* the most surprising of fauns!” she had declared, laughing.

Not his affair, certainly—yet was not such obvious fear in the eyes of a woman, any woman, his affair? His late exploits among the Riffs had left him with a peculiar sensitiveness toward the congenital helplessness of the sex.

So that when, at the foot of the steep path, he encountered an envoy of the school-teacher’s panting up it to earn his promised *duro*—for Americans had come at last, the child reported, quite genuine Americans this time!—Nacio abandoned his purpose of returning that day to the bosom of his family, who would doubtless be already concealing from one another a certain stoic uneasiness as to his whereabouts with the *White Goose*. It occurred to him that these latest newcomers in Andorra might indeed bode some harm to their compatriots on the *tuc*.

They proved, however, to be merely a pair of tanned and laconic young Western engineers, advance guards of a great railroad tunnel about to be built beneath the Pyrenees, thus obviating that age-long barrier between Europe and the Spanish Peninsula, and revolutionizing trade among nations.

"*Mais, à quoi bon?*" wondered the Basque, reflecting that trade did very well as it was, especially for Andorra, what with the natural mountain by-products of smuggling and cattle-running. * * * In order to reassure those anxious watchers on the *tuc*, he returned later to their house.

The lady did not seem, however, to find his news as reassuring as he had hoped. Her husband had gone already down into the town to investigate. It was always like that, she said, wringing her hands unconsciously in a fluttering way that made him wish to hold and still them. They had made a fresh start in place after place where questions are not asked—South America, the China coast, Algiers—and always soon or late somebody recognized him, because he could not keep away from his compatriots.

"He's so homesick, you see," she explained, with a little break in her voice; adding that homesickness was worse for a man than for a woman, whose home is where her husband happens to be, her children, her familiar "things."

Nacio nodded comprehension; homesickness was something any Basque could understand.

She tried to check herself, aware that she was talking too freely; but the relief of having at last some one to whom she could talk at all was too great. There were reasons, she told him, haltingly, why her husband dared not be recognized again, danger of extradition papers, one never knew —

"You fear, madame," he asked, with the grave simplicity so much easier to bear than tact, "that these fellow-countrymen might betray your presence here to the law?" Any Basque regards with a certain tolerant indifference laws which personal judgment has not confirmed.

"If not these, then others! This tunnel project means more and more of them to come, since wherever there's engineering going on there seem to be Americans. And even if no Americans betray us, Andorrans will!—They've begun to hate us here, I think, though Heaven knows why. It's the beginning of another end. We'll simply have to be moving on again—but where? And how?"

Nacio answered the despairing question, speaking this time quite seriously. "In our valleys, madame, people do not ask questions, nor are they quite as *dévotes*, perhaps, as these bigoted Catalans. Certainly I have not heard," he added, with some pride,

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"of any Basque betraying a neighbor to the law, even a neighbor who was a stranger! We have, in fact, a saying that 'strangers come to us from God.'"

He saw how the suggestion tempted her. She asked, after a long moment of thought: "Is living cheap in your valleys? You see, we are not people who can afford to—well, to travel about, like you, in airplanes! In fact"—she flushed rather painfully—"what money we have is nearly gone."

Nacio explained that his present vehicle was merely a borrowed one. "In our village the accepted travel is still by donkeyback, since my grandmother is most strict about extravagance. Houses are not easily to be found," he went on, thoughtfully, "but in our own *etcheonda* there are a number of empty rooms, since my brother has lately added to it a family wing of his own——"

He broke off, surprised again by her laugh, that light little laugh with its minor undertone. He did not know how singularly youthful he looked to her at that moment, with his curly head, his clear eyes, his wisp of mustache accenting the grave young sweetness of the lips.—Her faun trying to be quite practical, pretending to be a man!

"My dear boy," she said in the maternal way women so often adopted with Nacio, "do you really think that stern old Basque grandmother of yours

would welcome into her house indefinitely a perfectly strange young female with husband and child attached, especially one who came—well, under a cloud?”

“But you don’t know our *madre*! She dislikes to have unused rooms in the house; she enjoys the company of strangers; she——” Suddenly he paused again, his face shadowing to recall a certain other attempt of his at rescuing distressed damsels, which had been none too well received *chez Urruty*. Rosemary saw the shadow.

“Ah no, that is a test to which I would not care to put even Spanish hospitality!—of which, as it happens, I have seen singularly little.”

“Ours,” he corrected her, “would be Basque hospitality, madame, not Spanish!”

Nevertheless, she refused it. “For Americans would be sure to appear there, too, soon or late; why, your own sister- and brother-in-law are American! No, no, my dear; people who live under a cloud must learn to live under it alone. When we go away again, it will have to be to some even more remote spot than this, which nobody ever visits; even”—she smiled forlornly—“by airplane! And I’m beginning to wonder if there is such a place left in all the world.”

Then Nacio had suddenly his inspiration. The

Val Caché! He told her of it eagerly, that ancient sanctuary of his people, well known to himself since his own family happened to be the titular guardians of it; the hidden entrance of which, indeed, was not far from Urruty property. It was the *plan*, or bed, of one of those high lakes in which the Pyrenean peaks were but islands during prehistoric times; so sheltered and guarded round by precipices thick with their primeval growth of stone pine and cedar as to be invisible even from close above, except from the air itself. Its sole entrance was through a carefully hidden twisting underground tunnel wide enough only for the passage of laden pack animals in single file; but once inside a *jasse*, or pasture land, revealed itself, which offered abundant forage not only for cattle, but for man as well, since the little waters of it teemed with fish, and wild game had bred there undisturbed for centuries—a sort of reservoir, indeed, for the fauna which still make of the inner Pyrenees a sportsman's paradise. There was even ample shelter provided in the form of caves, broad, shallow hillside chambers in the living rock, which had served many times before the needs of man, even from prehistoric days. Nacio, warming to his theme, described one of the subterranean caverns discovered lately by himself and his neighbor, the savant, Etcheverray, which contained certain picture-

writings rarer than those of the Mas d'Azil or Altamira; also other records to prove what manner of man had lived in them; oddly marked pebbles; crude stone implements; shards of "that pottery which is of all human products the easiest to break and the hardest to destroy"; tiny harpoons of bone; fine retouched flints ——

"What sort of flints—Azilian or Aurignacian?" demanded a voice behind him; and Nacio turned in surprise to see the apathetic husband standing in the doorway, listening quite eagerly. It was the first time the man had shown any indication of interest in his presence.

"*Tiens!*" he murmured. "Monsieur is perhaps, like ourselves, an amateur of prehistory?"

"Not quite an amateur. I taught a little archæology before I gave up university life for business," replied the American, briefly; and there ensued talk bristling with phrases strange to the ordinary vocabulary: hormazon and hormigon, the Liby-Tartessian culture, eoliths, megaliths, and the like; to which the woman listened with growing respect. Who could he be, this youth who called himself peasant yet was the friend of prince-bishops, this very erudite young warrior, this native Perseus who had arrived so modernly to her rescue by airplane?—For that it was at last a rescue became more and more probable to

her as she listened. She dared not be too sure; it was a long time since she had permitted herself a friend; women ask questions, and men of the Latin countries do not often offer disinterested friendship to the wives of other men. But, watching the young Basque, hope grew upon her.

She ventured at last a quiet suggestion: "Ned dear, how would you like to go over to the Basque side of the mountains and see all these things for yourself? If you like it there, Mariflor and I could easily follow you—make a sort of summer camping-trip of it?" She waited, tense, for his answer.

"We should probably not be very welcome, my dear," he hesitated. "A find like that is too valuable to share with the general public. Though, perhaps, in strictest confidence ——"

Nacio assured them with quick courtesy that the Val Caché and its prehistoric relics, also his brother's plane, were entirely at monsieur's disposal.

Then, said the exile, on a long quivering breath of relief, they would not wait for summer; they would go at once!—the next morning, very early. "Before people are stirring in the town, please. I happen very much to dislike crowds."

The *Oie Blanche* made thereafter several of her most successful flights between Andorra and the Val Caché; became, in fact, a moving-van of sorts

for a collection of household articles perhaps unprecedented in the history of aviation. Nacio had remembered that womanly predilection for "things." One journey took over the half-wit servant, gibbering like a monkey in his meek terror and clinging fast to the wool of the unconcerned young sheep-dog, whose affair it was to merely guard her family with her life, in any element. The last flight conveyed Rosemary and her child; the latter, a docile little elfin creature usually far too quiet for her years, beguiling the sky journey with sudden high birdlike warblings of pleasure, while the former prayed wordlessly under her breath, with closed eyes.

But when she opened them at last upon a high green meadow-basin, flowing with wind, full of sea-murmur that April morning; a valley where sea-gulls from the Atlantic wheeled and dipped, where grass and wildflowers grew taller than her child's bright head, where a cascade of liquid crystal came floating slenderly down from snow-capped heights, and caught itself, and fell again, and flowed musically away among willows; when she saw her husband smiling at her, actually smiling again from the threshold of a hillside cave hung with native blankets, and furnished with certain familiar indispensables of home—her canvas steamer chairs, her chintz cushions, even the portable phonograph, already in action—

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Rosemary could not speak, but turned to the pleased young maker of these miracles and put her arms about his neck and kissed him. Nacio blushed to the ears with the surprise of it. It happened to be—though this was of course no matter for confession to his fellow-officers—the first time he had been kissed upon the lips by any woman not a sister to him. * * * He decided that the pleasures of promiscuous kissing had been somewhat exaggerated.

There ensued a period of unexplained disappearances on the part of Nacio, of which his family were the somewhat puzzled observers.

"The *doguin*," commented the matriarch to her granddaughter-in-law, with satisfaction, "seems content to keep his feet upon earth awhile. He begins again to interest himself—but in what? *Je me demande!*"

"Or rather in whom?" commented Emily to herself. "Why not ask him?" she added, aloud, rather intrigued by the boy's mysterious comings and goings, his pleased yet furtive manner as of a dog that has managed to conceal treasure-trove where he should not; above all by his odd and most unusual interest in things domestic.

It is never, however, a Basque characteristic to ask questions. "No doubt," shrugged Madame Urruty, "he and our friend Tubal have between them un-

earthed more bones and stones to dig among; although one agrees with our peasants that little good can come of disturbing the remains of those who have assuredly been long enough with God to be allowed to rot in peace!"

Emily determined, not sharing the Basque aversion for curiosity, to ask the savant whether anything new archæologically was afoot—although what archæology might have to do with the boy's sudden passion for domestic detail aroused her thoughtful consideration.

For Nacio had taken to inquiring meticulously as to the proper care of children—was a tendency to croup avoidable by the wearing of the rubber shoe? for example; whether fruit in the green state was liable to produce a colic when cooked? His new friend for all her pretty motherly devotion, showed a certain impracticality which astonished Nacio, unaccustomed as he was to helpless women; Emily herself, when she married his brother Esteban, had not been more innocent of the ordinary affairs of womankind, such as housewifery and the care of young. He felt, too, obligation to supply as far as possible deficiencies in the ménage, since his protégés were entirely dependent upon himself for communication with the outside world.

There began, therefore, at the Urruty hacienda a

series of unaccountable losses—inexplicable, indeed, seeing that there had never been known in the valley a thief other than passing gypsies. Madame Urruty missed certain blankets of last winter's weaving; her favorite kettle disappeared, together with a long-handled copper saucepan; a number of Emily's books and treasured American periodicals. Objects even stranger vanished as if by the hand of djinns and gnomes; small Léocadie's rocking-chair, imported for her pleasure out of far America, also a fine new doll—and great was the hue and cry therefor; a folding rubber bathtub left over from family excursions into the world at large.

Emily, observant of these things, said nothing, thoughtfully. At last she put a private question to their friend Etcheverray, chosen *chenhango* of any member of the family who needed a confidant. The savant looked quite blank for a moment, then rallied to the defense in the loyal fashion of his sex. But certainly, he agreed, guardedly, new archæological explorations were afoot. Were they not usually afoot with those whose tastes lay in that direction?—No, he did not feel himself at liberty to state just where; that, he murmured, was a secret of too great import to be trusted to non-scientists.

A few days later, however, he managed to encounter, not entirely by chance, his fellow amateur

of prehistory in a region familiar to both of them, the path that approached the secret entrance of the Val Caché. The youth was walking, with that light and tireless stride which makes plain and mountain matters of equal ease to Basques; since the sturdy mule he had borrowed from his father's pastures bore quite enough of a burden without himself. It was laden with a rather heterogeneous supply of food-stuffs, a folding bathtub, and among other oddities, a child's rocking-chair.

"*A la bonne heure!*" remarked his neighbor, dismounting from his bicycle for purposes of quizzical investigation. "Since when does a distinguished retired officer of aviation take upon himself the humble profession of mule-carrier?—I understand, *mon cher*, that you are renewing research in our *tuto*."

Nacio, looking rather sheepish over it, admitted that such was indeed the case.

"Good! I shall be glad of further notes for my monograph on the subject," commented the savant, pleasantly. "Apparently you prepare yourself for a long siege? The amount of food does not surprise, the digestion of your fortunate years being what it is—but, a bathtub, an infant's chair? May one be indiscreet enough to inquire, *mon vieux*, just what part these are to play in pre-Azilian research?"

Thus cornered, the younger man made relieved

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confession. It had already occurred to him that if he came by any accident, if the *Oie Blanche* were to let him down, for example, or if his silver rib ceased to function normally, things might go rather hard with his *protégés* of the Val Caché.

Thus it happened that a new friend was introduced to the exiles, a distinguished-looking gray-haired gentleman who kissed Rosemary's hand in the French fashion, and began at once quietly to discuss with her wary husband their mutual interests in archæology; so that after a while the two started off together, with lanterns, to explore the cavern which the savant called, with a certain proprietary pride, their *tuto*.

The others followed, small Mariflor because she followed inevitably at her friend Nacio's heels wherever he went; Rosemary with some misgivings—she did not share the others' interest in picture-writings, hideous red hands with the finger-joints removed, sacrifice victims of some prehistoric funeral; depictions almost too lifelike of animals which no longer exist, in particular a certain sinister-looking devil-god, half man, half beast, which Nacio called "the Sorcerer."

"I wonder if the peasants hereabouts aren't right," she demurred, "in thinking it dangerous to disturb the secret places of such very ancient gods?"

Nacio shrugged. "You have perhaps to thank such superstitions for your privacy here . . . It is the old gods, far more than our Basque laws, whose presence makes this valley forbidden territory! But"—he hesitated—"the old gods were our gods, Rosemary. Us they will not harm.—Would you like me to put you under their protection?"

"Oh, do!" she said, half smiling, half in earnest; she felt a certain need of propitiating whatever gods might be, if only for the sake of her child.

It was a curious ancient incantation he said over them, hand holding hand, in the presence of those strangely lifelike figures that seemed to mow and gibber in the lantern-light flickering over the cavern roof where they had been gravled in the dawn of time; now quite close above them, since the *tuto* was filled nearly to the top with its accumulated silt of centuries. He had learned the incantation in childhood of old Damasa, witch-wife of their house, invoking against devil-gods certain deities beneficent to men—Aherbelste of the Black Rocks, Laxarrou of the High Places, Baïegorisc of the Red Earth. But when he had finished, Nacio made also over the child's forehead the sign of the cross—"Which is the best magic of all," he explained, gravely.

The mother, Protestant though she was, felt oddly reassured by the little ceremony. At such moments

—nor did it occur to her alone—one sensed in Nacio Urruty something more than the serious and simple boy, the detached young faun peering at life to see what it was made of; one sensed the mystic, the ascetic, the possible priest. It was a thought which oddly troubled her. She said, to hide it: “Do you practice devil worship, then, you Basques? I am surprised that you have any dealings with powers which, whatever else, they may have been, were certainly not good Catholics!”

Monsieur Etcheverray remarked that it was hardly the fault of the Old Ones—he spoke of them in the Spanish fashion, *Los Viejos*—if they were not Christians, since they had the misfortune to exist a great many centuries before the beginning of the Christian era; and went on to speak of a hardy Arctic race which had dwelt in these caves before the Stone Age, which had all but disappeared during the foggy warmer season of the flood period—supermen, he called them, giant in brain and structure and intelligence, the Crô-Magnons, or reindeer men, the Red Race; evidences of whose superior culture is to be found in the finer picture-writings, the delicate implements, the shards of rare pottery. These caves were probably the inland outposts of this wide-roving hunting-people, he said, showing them how the lifelike animals done in black and red and ocher,

cleverly using as bodies the natural protuberances of the rock, had always a barb or knife stuck through some vital part to indicate the desired manner of death.

"*Los Viejos* believed that to make representation of any living creature was to give power over it—a reason that you will find it difficult today to make photographs of our Pyrenean peasants. The Sorcerer himself"—he indicated the sinister half-man with horns and tail—"is rarely to be found in picture-writing, because only the boldest dared attempt to destroy their devil-god by graving his image, even as today, among certain simple peoples—the Irish, your own negroes of America, madame—ignorant folk will make the image of an enemy to impale with pins."

It was to Rosemary all a sort of fantastic, incredible fairy tale, part of the remote otherwhereness of her present existence—this talk of forgotten æons of time when the manifold mountains looming about their refuge had offered refuge to some forgotten race. "Why were they content to live in caves, your supermen?" she asked, curiously. "And from what older place did they come here—from Egypt, or perhaps China?"

"Ah no, madame; the Aurignacian culture antedates both. Where and why, indeed?" shrugged the

savant. "These are questions the world has been asking itself for a long time!"

"Monsieur Etcheverray," remarked her husband, "happens to be perhaps the world's leading exponent of the Atlantean theory, my dear. The 'reindeer men' he speaks of are believed to be natives of the lost continent of Atlantis, who escaped to this adjoining continent before the other sank."

"You mean," she wondered, struck by the recurrent phrase "our people," "that you Basques believe yourselves to be descendants of the Atlanteans?"

"You also would believe it, madame, if you could see my brother Esteban," put in Nacio. "I, too, am of the Crô-Magnon type—the pentagonal-shaped head, the jutting angular features—but of course a less fine specimen!" he added, modestly.

She thought, with a sudden little stricture of the heart, that if the brother were a finer specimen it was just as well that she could not see him; and came up again into the green, sunny security of their hidden valley with much the same relief as Eve may have felt when she emerged from chaos upon the Garden of Eden. She was a woman who lived intensely, almost desperately, in the present.

Indeed, their life just then held something reminiscent of the Garden of Eden—long, happy days when she and Nacio worked together over the domesticat-

ing of their wilderness, planting a little garden, tending their animals, sharing very primitive household tasks. It was a companionship dangerous enough for one unaccustomed to such heady brew, as she well realized—but since the boy himself did not realize, what matter? Her child was always with them, a transformed little girl who had learned to laugh and sing and romp almost like those other children of whom she never tired of hearing—the sporting young Leocadie, who made up in freckles what she lacked in teeth; her older brother Wally, recently promoted from the ownership of a pony to that of a half-sized horse; placid Pedro the Less, a trot-about of tender years with an abnormal capacity for getting into mischief. There were also the twins lately acquired by Bette and John de Maytie, whose infant appetites were so gargantuan that their busy mother must needs carry them with her everywhere, one tucked under either arm; like a pair, said their uncle depreciatively, of squirming pink shoats.

“And what does their mother give them to eat?” demanded Mariflor interestedly of her friend, who explained without undue embarrassment. “And what is a shoat, Nacio?” she demanded, further.

He brought her one, shocked by such urban ignorance—a fine little curly-tailed Berkshire which his grandmother missed with dismay from its proper

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pen, but which became thereafter Mariflor's favorite companion, duly christened "Pinky." Nacio recalled in his sister Bette the same inherent weakness for things which squealed and squirmed and needed coddling. They ran rather true to form, apparently, these woman-creatures.

The two were quite inseparable; Rosemary found herself growing even a little jealous of the intimacy. Nacio was well accustomed to being followed about by worshipful young relatives, had indeed something in common with their candid simplicity which elders frequently seemed to lack. He treated Mariflor with the same young-manly tolerance he showed to the children of his family, not hesitating to reprove where necessary, rough in his play with her as the roughly gentle dog. Yet the mother could not but notice that, whatever else he brought in to them—and her faun was a surprisingly practical provider—he never neglected to produce some offering for Mariflor, selected with intuitive understanding of her needs. Rosemary thought, looking at him with eyes it was just as well he failed to see, that it could not have been many years since Nacio himself, tall, powerful young "reindeer-man" that he was, must have been rather fond himself of playthings.

It was not only Mariflor who found new life in the Val Caché, but Rosemary also; there was a deepen-

ing luster of the hair, of the rose-clear skin, of the soft amber eyes, beneath which the shadows became less marked. Her delicate complexion took on the golden warmth of ripe apricots. Even her husband noticed the change in her, he who noticed so little nowadays. Once Nacio overheard him murmur, in his apathetic way, "You are beginning to look—happy again, my dear."

She bent over him quickly then and laid her cheek on his head, with one of the tender impulses that always gave the Basque a slight shock of surprise. He had accustomed himself to such gestures on the part of Emily with his handsome brother, even of Bette with her half-American husband—Americans, it appeared, had little conjugal reserve. But that wifely tenderness should survive a shadow such as obviously rested upon these *protégés* of his gave the young man a vague feeling of distaste. It appeared unseemly.

"I *am* happy, darling!" he heard her say. "How could I help it, with life so simple here, and sweet, and—and safe again? Oh, Ned, my husband, won't you try to—to forget now, and be a little happy, too?"

But the man put her aside and rose and went away, in his usual preoccupied fashion, as if he had always some important business to attend to elsewhere.

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Nacio, indeed, came to be hardly aware of his presence, except as a figure vaguely moving about in the background, intent upon his vague affairs. The visit of Monsieur Etcheverray, although not repeated, was providential in supplying definite occupation, since the archæologist had tactfully enlisted the other's aid in making and tabulating further investigations—Etcheverray was a savant of other things than prehistory. But the exile's first enthusiasm for the task had lapsed again into his old dogged apathy. He came and went in silence, rarely joining them even at meal-times, taking no part whatever in their life. Nacio treated him with the unvarying courtesy due a guest, frequently managed to bring in to him antiquated American newspapers, over which the man pored with a tense absorption that was rather piteous. But the younger man found it difficult to offer even pity to one who so obviously neglected his duties as husband and father.

Rosemary tried to apologize for this odd indifference. "It's not like him, really it isn't, Nacio! He used to be almost too considerate and indulgent, doing everything he could to help me, taking care of our child, teaching her lessons, trying to make up to me in all sorts of ways for—well ——" She broke off abruptly. "I don't know what has made him change like this, lately! Sometimes I almost

think——” She could not continue for a moment, an expression reappearing in her eyes which Nacio had come to dread. “My husband,” she went on presently, with more steadiness, “had a very severe nervous breakdown once, from overwork. That is why we had to come away, why we avoid seeing people who know us, why we—we like to keep ourselves to ourselves.”

The Basque nodded; he had heard before of that odd American ailment called nervous breakdown. “Our Pyrenean climate,” he observed, “is of great benefit to those who have been out of health.”

His unquestioning acceptance of anything she chose to tell him smote her with sudden shame. “Oh, my dear, of course you know I am lying! You know why we came away, why we can never go back to our friends, our own country!” Her hands were catching at each other in the piteous little fluttering way they had almost forgotten lately.

He said, gently: “But, no, Rosemary, I do not know. I have thought there might be a reason, some little breaking of a law—you have in your country so many laws, have you not?—some sudden *crise* of anger, perhaps, which is a thing that might occur to anyone. I myself once very nearly killed in anger.”

She said, with a pale little smile, that it was at

least not quite so bad as murder; only a matter of money, quite a lot of money which had been given him for investment and which he had borrowed—rather a complicated story——

“Then, do not tell it me,” the youth adjured her, “for I should certainly not understand; in matters of finance my family declare that I am *un peu fou*.” He had in fact the utter indifference to money of those who have known neither need nor lack of it. “Your husband, no doubt, was also careless of money, being by nature a scholar, interested like myself in matters more important?”

She whispered: “Oh, my dear, how have you learned to be so kind so young?”—and because he saw that she was weeping, and therefore oddly dangerous to the equanimity, he began hastily to enlarge upon his own murderous *crise* of anger; an affair, he assured her, which had cured him of women forever.

“Cured you—of women?” she repeated, a smile beginning to struggle with her tears. “Oh, but, Nacio ——!”

He nodded gravely. “As women, you understand; since she for whom I would have killed a man proved in the end—not worthy.”

“Ah, that hurt!—there is nothing that hurts more than to be ashamed of some one you have loved.”

She spoke as one who knew. "Still, my dear boy, you mustn't let one wretched girl condemn the whole sex for you!"

He explained that English Dorothy was not the only female of his knowledge to be tried and found wanting. "You should hear the officers of my service talk! They are not serious, women"—evidently a grave offense. "They have neither honesty nor modesty as a man knows these things; they are incapable of friendship, but can think of nothing except love and love-making until they are too old to think at all!"

She could have told him, but did not, that no woman of any age would encounter such stirring young masculinity as his without certain thoughts of love and love-making; any more than one may gaze at the sea without dreaming of far-off lands, or at moonlight without recalling other moonlights.

She said, instead: "Don't be too hard on us, Nacio! Life isn't any too easy for women, who have to get what they need as best they can. Try not to be too hard on us!"

To be safe from such a sex, he explained, shrugging, it was necessary to be a little hard.

She laughed at that. "And so your heart has become a rock?—one of these Aurignacian retouched

flints, perhaps that you and Ned and Monsieur Etcheverray are always talking about?"

He saw she was teasing him, as women so often did, and nodded imperturbably.

"Take care, my dear! Flint is a thing that strikes out sparks," she warned, only half in jest. For she knew very well what was beginning to happen to Nacio, if he did not, and eased her conscience with the thought: "It is for my child, it is for the sake of my Mariflor!"—Women must get what they need as best they can.

She said to him on another occasion, gently, "Surely you do not think *me* incapable of friendship, Nacio?"

"Ah, *you*!—You are different," he said, and meant it. Women who cared for Nacio—young Bette, his sister-in-law Emily, his plaintive plump mother, Fancine,—all these seemed "different" to Nacio, a class exempt from criticism, sacrosanct. And he had begun to observe in his *protégée* certain rather poignant qualities which fitted her in his esteem for their very special company; notably her tender, caressing ways with the child, the unappreciative husband, even the sullen half-wit servant who was obviously her devoted slave. Raised in the Spartan atmosphere of a Basque home, where undue display of the affections is not encouraged—*no seas*

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pasta, as his grandmother was wont to say—the observant boy found himself even a little envious.

He wondered sometimes how he could ever have thought her less than beautiful; though Rosemary's features were no longer quite clear to him, he saw them as if through the misty late-summer haze that was beginning to clothe their upland valley with the quality of dream. At moments, indeed, catching the unconscious ardor of his gaze upon her, the woman was a little frightened, glad of the reminding presence of her child; but it was not Nacio who frightened her.

Part of the growing glamour was her music, since that summer would be always inextricably mingled in his mind—long golden afternoons, dusks lit by drifting lucioles, nights when stars sang together silently—with the cool, strange harmonies of Debussy and César Franck, the Northern mysticism of Grieg, the passionate intensities of Chopin.

"You are a musician, no?" he asked Rosemary once, respectfully, music being with him an untaught racial passion.

"Yes," she answered, absently.

"Your phonograph told me you were *artiste*," he explained.

She patted its sleek mahogany sides gratefully. "America's one great contribution to art!" she said.

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"We are too busy a people to produce a music of our own, like you others. We have to manage what we can by machinery."

"But it is a music so much better than we others make!" he protested, seriously.

She shook her head without speaking. To her thereafter music would always mean the thought of Nacio mounting a hillside path, her child and the dog rapt at his heels, at his lips, Pan-like, a shepherd's pipe playing—nothing at all: Wind in the leaves, rippling of water, passing shadows, the sound of silence. She knew that never again would she have need to dread the sound of silence.

It was the fellow-touch of artistry that made her company so congenial to a dreamer raised in the substantial Urruty tradition; even more so than that of his sister Bette or the deeply-admired wife of his brother, whom in certain ways Rosemary resembled. She had the same whimsical air of detachment from surroundings, the same appearance of exotic daintiness. American women appeared to need much protection, he thought; although it was true that his sister-in-law showed a less becoming docility of manner toward the sterner sex. This gentle docility, together with Rosemary's helpless impracticality, had their appeal for the masculinity of the young Basque; the tremendous business she made of tasks which

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would have seemed to other women of his acquaintance mere child's play. Many of these he had taken upon himself, with a capability which would have astonished his family, accustomed to regard Nacio as a none-too-useful member of the household. But no member of Madame Urruty's household could remain entirely impractical, and he had his lore of wood and stream as well to place at his friend's disposal. From him Rosemary learned how to prepare on the spit such small game as he trapped for her—since firearms were forbidden in the Val Caché; how to snare trout and salmon from the pool at the foot of the cascade and to broil them on a grill of rhododendron twigs, over a juniper fire; how to stew, out of lentils and herbs and carcasses of fowl, the savory ragoûts and cassoulets of the country. She learned to make beds of fragrant freshly-cut pine branches, spread thick with blankets, upon which she and her husband slept as they had not slept since childhood, with a fire always smoldering on the narrow ledge outside their cave as protection from night-prowling animals.

Nacio, who had his own sleeping-cave near by, with one for the Catalan servant on the other side, was surprised to note how little fear these city-bred Americans seemed to have of the natural perils of the wilderness; the courage of ignorance, perhaps

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—or perhaps, to such fugitives from civilization, the presence of wild beasts appeared less formidable than that of men. Sometimes at night, on her bed of boughs, with nothing but a blanket curtain between her and the wide primordial dark, Rosemary woke suddenly to the furtive padding of footfalls, a sinister rustle in the bracken, a harsh, uncanny cry from the near-by forest; when the young she-dog, Andorre, never far from her charge by day or night, would bristle and rise stiff-legged, growling deep in the throat. Then Rosemary would bethink her, shivering, of how long humans had been strangers to the life of the Val Caché.

But always the danger passed, and she slept again, remembering drowsily: “Nacio is near,” or “Nacio will be coming soon.”

Storms let them be, the mistral itself that year was like an April zephyr. A spell of magic seemed to lie upon their ancient sanctuary place, as if the old Basque gods had indeed taken under protection these other refugees from a lost world.

So the summer deepened around them, shortened, began to wane. The woman, if she could, would have stayed it with her two hands. “When winter comes ——” she reminded herself sometimes, fearfully. “When winter comes ——” and could not finish. She clung to each day passionately as if it

were her last, drained each twilight of its still sweetness, could not bear that the slim crescent moons should one by one wax full and matronly, and diminish into the gibbous pallor of their end.

Already the bracken began to yellow, soon they would be gathering it for fodder; and pumpkins were put to ripen on the balconies of the tall village houses, with pastel-shaded beans, and corn that looked like golden clusters of bananas. Soon crystal flurries would begin to glitter about the high white peaks, and the tramontana swooping down from the Haute Pyr would bring swarms of snowflakes that stung like wasps. A season glorious enough for Basque "reindeer men." But after two Pyrenean winters Rosemary had lost her courage for them.

"Oh, Nacio, what *am* I going to do about my Mariflor?" she cried once to the boy. "When we return to Andorra ——"

"Why should you return?" he asked, quietly.

She sighed. "Adam and Eve themselves were not permitted to remain forever in the Garden of Eden!"—she blushed a little to remember why. "But even this Eden is no place for a child to remain indefinitely—a lady-child, Nacio, a little American girl! No proper playmates, no schooling, no opportunities.—Oh, my dear, however am I going to make a future for my Mariflor?"



"O, MY DEAR, HOWEVER AM I TO MAKE A FUTURE
FOR MY LITTLE MARIFLOR?"

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He answered this wail of desperation as best he could. "You will send her when the times comes, no doubt, to the good sisters at Saint Jean, or at Toulouse, where she will be quite happy, as my younger sisters are."

She drew back in sharp dismay. "Nuns? Send my little daughter away from me to a convent, and let them make a nun of her?"

He lifted his eyebrows; it was his first experience of a prejudice which seemed to him as ignorant as the religious superstitions of peasants.—He explained that European girls of good family were always educated at convents, where an extremely small percentage took the veil. "Though far worse things might happen," he added, quietly, "than to enter the life of religion! There with God one is always safe."

"Safe! You speak as if life were one long peril, Nacio!"

"And you do not find it so?"—He could have bitten his tongue out for the untactful reminder; but she was thinking of something else, of a possibility in Nacio that had once before dismayed her—the hint of the ascetic, the potential priest. She eyed aghast the magnificent physique, the broad brow, the strong, sweet mouth, all the young male beauty

of him. She thought of his wisely gentle ways with her child.

"No, no, you mustn't!" she said, incoherently. "Promise me you will never be so great a coward, Nacio!"

He lifted his brows in sheer astonishment; it was not often that members of his family were exhorted against cowardice.

"Yes, a coward!—you're afraid of life," she declared, even as his grandmother had once declared. "Afraid of what you French-speaking people call the *génie d'espèce*. Don't be, don't be, my dear!" she urged with sudden earnestness. "There's nothing wrong about it; it's the rightest thing there is; your spark of the sacred fire to guard—and to pass on, Nacio, to pass on! You *must* have children, a man like you; it's your duty to humanity!"

At that he grinned. "You should know our *madre*," he observed. "In certain ways you would, I think, find yourselves congenial; she is forever regretting the older days when priests of our race were encouraged to marry and bear young.—All men," he continued in rare, shy confidence, "look forward, I think, to the experience of fatherhood. But to have that, is it then always necessary to undergo marriage?" He explained, simply, observing her rather startled look: "Père Marcós of our parish,

for example—he is ‘father’ to a larger family than marriage brings. Do you think, Rosemary, that every tree is intended to flower and bear fruit? Are not some,” he asked, rather hesitatingly, “intended merely, perhaps, to give shelter?”

It was a question she dared not answer. * * * She brought the conversation back to the subject of her child. “Even if Mariflor were not too young to send away from me, I am afraid I couldn’t afford a convent school just now. We’ve so little money left! Oh, but, Nacio, what is going to happen to us when that is gone? I could give music lessons, perhaps I could even get concert engagements somewhere; but—in Andorra?”

“Your husband is not able to work for a living, like other men?”

Then she told him what she had to tell, haltingly, incoherently. “Haven’t you noticed what is happening to my poor Ned? Perhaps it happened long ago, only I didn’t realize—The fear of being found, you know, or—of not being found! They could have taken us, I suppose, whenever they wanted to, really; only they didn’t want to—being our friends. Oh, my dear, it’s a terrible thing to be deliberately forgotten by your friends!”

The Basque agreed, soberly. That, he thought, must be exile indeed.

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"My husband pays no attention to anything any more, except his eternal cave-digging," she went on, rather desperately. "Mariflor and I might as well not be there! All he asks is to be let alone. Not thinking straight, you see! You remember how pitifully eager he was to leave Andorra. I don't believe he will ever consent to go back there. But—where next? Oh, Nacio, have I got to spend the rest of my life wandering about the world's hiding-places alone with—with a lunatic?"

It was out at last, the fear that had so often troubled him at the back of her eyes, which was no mere dread of winter, or loneliness, or the law.

Nacio answered her, aghast—for although he had thought the exile strange enough in his ways, it had not occurred to him that the man was mad.—"No, no, Rosemary, *pauvrete!* You have borne enough! Now you must come to me, you and the little Mary-flower!"

It was of course what she had known must happen soon or late, what she had indeed willed to happen; yet, now that she had her wish, she got small comfort from it. The compunction that gripped her heart was not for the broken man who seemed no longer either to want or need her, but for Nacio himself. What would he do with her

life, this detached, ascetic young knight-errant?—
And she with his?

It was a question which occurred in due time to Nacio as well; so that he took counsel, after the family habit, with their wise neighbor. * * *

Family curiosity over Nacio's mystery had reached at last such a climax that Emily also consulted Etcheverray, feeling a certain responsibility for her young brother-in-law's initial excursions into romance by way of English literature.

"What *is* the boy up to?" she demanded of their friend, certain that he, if anyone, would be in Nacio's confidence. "Archæological research my eye! No ordinary normal young male creature would devote an entire Pyrenean summer to pursuit of what the *madre* calls 'bones and stones'!"

The savant mildly reminded her that he himself had devoted many a Pyrenean summer to such pursuit, since Pyrenean winters made it somewhat impracticable.

"But you, my dear, are far from being an ordinary normal young male creature!—being the only man extant who could live all his life on the memory of one woman," said Emily, touching his hand in affectionate apology for the reminder. "Nacio is not you!—in fact, if it were anyone but Nacio, I'd

suspect him of having set himself up a little establishment somewhere."

An uncontrollable flicker in the other's impassive gaze made her give a sudden gasp. "Tubal! You don't mean that he has? Oh, oh!—but where? What sort is she?"

"‘She’? What she, my friend?" murmured Etcheverray, rather too carelessly. He was not an experienced liar; nor was Emily Urruty a young woman easy to deceive.

"My word! the *madre* ought to be satisfied at last! ‘Experience,’ indeed!" she muttered. "Tubal, tell me just one thing: Is it a sort of person he could marry?"

The other imperceptibly shook his head.

"As bad as that? Oh, the poor darling!—he does seem doomed to get so much unhappiness out of his manly pleasures!"

"*C'est son métier,*" murmured the other rather cryptically; and warned her that all they could do about it now was to continue to trust the boy.

"That of course," said Esteban's wife with pride. "I know the breed!"

Nacio had already consulted Etcheverray, who heard him through without comment.

"Eh, *pucelet de mon cœur!*" he sighed at last, "you will probably spend the rest of your life tilting

at windmills—other people's windmills—and we shall probably spend the rest of our lives endeavoring to prevent you!”

“And in the end helping me,” remarked the boy with engaging confidence.

“And in the end helping you—how not? But, *mon cher*”—the savant felt his way delicately here—“am I to understand that you are not as yet the lover of this poor lady—that you have not even the ambition to become so?”

“Certainly not!” said Nacio, impatiently. “She is older than myself—besides, she is not free, Monsieur Tubal.”

“Ah, true,” murmured the other. “One had forgotten the impossibility. But, in that case, you think it wise to burden yourself at your age with the adoption of an entire family? Is it not—almost too chivalrous a gesture?”

“This from you, Monsieur Tubal!” said the boy, reproachfully. Besides, he explained, very low, it was not entirely a gesture of abstract chivalry; one owed—he in particular owed—a certain debt to unhappy womankind, a certain duty as of reparation.

It was Nacio's first and only reference to his late experience of warfare in the Riff. The other understood, and laid a sympathetic hand on his shoulder.

Nevertheless, he continued hesitantly, though the impulse was quite natural, there were certain objections to Nacio's idea of vicarious reparation, not only on his own account. To set up a lady "In her furniture" as the French phrase goes, a married woman with no visible husband to protect her, was quite likely to give scandal in so exigent a community as theirs, might even result in serious consequences to the lady herself.—He was remembering a woman difficult for any man of that country to forget, one who in his own youth had been driven from their village by the public punishment of *charivari* because her virtue was under suspicion.

"But," protested the boy, lifting his head haughtily, "do you forget that even though Madame Rosemary would have no husband to protect her, she will have me, myself, Nacio Urruty?"—a *naïveté* for which the older man found no immediate response.

He approached the affair from another angle. "Your grandmother will perhaps not care to receive your friend and her child at the *etcheonda*"—Nacio winced at the memory of former grandmaternal sarcasms directed at milk-fed puppy-dogs who, manifestly unable to direct their own affairs, yet did not hesitate to undertake those of others. "Where then will you house this lady? There

is, to be sure," he continued, thoughtfully, "John de Maytie's *domes* in the village, old Ducontentia, unoccupied except for his atelier and the museum of antiquities. Doubtless your friend would be welcome enough to settle herself there; and I dare say pupils could be found for her in music, in English, perhaps in other accomplishments, now that we become so progressive a community!—But have you thought, my friend, of the bereft husband? What is to be done with him?"

The boy shrugged. Despite his proclivities for romance, he was no sentimentalist; he had his racial touch of *no seas pasta*.

"That is a matter," he said, indifferently, "which I am content to leave entirely to you, Monsieur Tubal."

The other made a gesture of resigned protest. "I dare say, I dare say!—one of the trifling neighborly duties of a *chenhango*. However, I fancy he will do well enough as a hermit, poor man, there with the Catalan servant—he will not be the first *malheureux* who has had to adjust his life to the lack of women!"

Nacio, therefore, was able to return to Rosemary with his plans well under way. She listened to them gratefully, acquiescently, if without any great enthusiasm. He, however, had enthusiasm for two;

his was a single-track nature, also a quite candid one, whom the necessity for so much concealment had somewhat irked. He longed for his people to know this tragic, lovely friend of his, with her little Mary-flower; he assured her that they were a most tribal folk, the Urruty, who shared alike one another's pleasures and sorrows. * * * It had not occurred to her that their projected flight would take them into the bosom of a family so close-knit, so patriarchal, who lived the simple feudal life of their own peasantry with the rather surprising addition of airplanes and steam-yachts.

"But how, once you know them, you will like our family," he promised, eagerly: Esteban, the great *pelotari*, who had made his marriage like any American, out of pure love; Pedro, their one-armed father, always elected alcalde because of his kindly wisdom; the shy and gifted husband of his sister Bette—"artist like yourself, Rosemary, only with the paints." And the little Mariflor would learn to make herself really noisy and mischievous like other children, there among the Urruty young.

"Yes," agreed Rosemary faintly, "it would be a happy experience for Mariflor."—"Always Mariflor!" she thought.

"And for you?—surely a little for you, also?" he asked, somewhat crestfallen.

He had prepared for her a little surprise, of which presently he told her, hoping to brighten her into more enthusiasm. It was a piano, no less, one of the three or four in the entire valley; bought at a bargain from the ladies Olhagarray, whose fingers grew too stiff for it now—elderly like themselves, it was true, a little uncertain and thin of voice as aging spinsters will become, but still very elegant of appearance, with a landscape painted on its façade, and two little candelabra. He, with the aid of the great blacksmith Olhaiby, had already removed this historic instrument, under cover of darkness, across the street to the house Ducontentia, where it awaited only her musician's magic to wake into new life and usefulness.—Was she not pleased to have a piano again? he inquired anxiously, seeing her eyes begin to fill.

Somehow he found her in his arms then, being comforted for he knew not what, her tears salt on his lips, the perfume from her hair making him a little dizzy.

"Oh, my dear," she whispered, incoherently, her cheek against his, "do you realize why I am doing this, deserting my poor husband, my wifely duty? Not that it will matter much to him!—But I am still a young woman, Nacio; younger than you think.

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It isn't that I am really afraid, you know!—Oh, Nacio, *do* you understand?"

He kissed her forehead then, very gently, not as a lover, but as a brother might; even (she thought again, with panic) as a priest might, in giving absolution. "Of course I understand, Rosemary! It is for the sake of your little one."

She closed her searching eyes. "I—I suppose so," she said, rather oddly.

Later, when she could better trust herself to speak, she tried once more. "Do you quite realize," she asked intently, "what the world is going to think and say, my dear, if we go away like this together? Not my world, which doesn't exist any more; but your world, Nacio!—your family, that rather terrible old grandmother?"

The young man nodded; his odd innocence was not entirely a matter of ignorance. "But does it matter," he said after a moment, "what people think and say, Rosemary, so long as it is not true?"

She whispered under her breath, "I wonder!"—What she wondered was how long she could keep him from finding out that what the world thinks, and says, is usually true.

At this point Fate and Madame Urruty—a conjunction of powers not unusual in that neighborhood—combined to take a hand in the affairs of the Val

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Cáché. Nacio, who had for some time regarded the family *etcheonda* merely as a base of supplies, returned from one of his prolonged and mysterious disappearances with a troubled question for his grandmother: When a child was unusually hot in the face and hands, and declined to eat, and complained of sharp pains in the interior, was the malady to be taken more seriously than an indigestion?

No malady, pronounced the household oracle, was to be taken more seriously than an indigestion; and inquired, with a sudden narrowing of sharp old eyes, the age of this suffering infant. She looked relieved when Nacio explained that it was not an infant, but a little girl near the age of Esteban's Wally, and serious beyond her years.

There ensued a fusillade of questions which somewhat bewildered the young man; dealing with the degree of fever, its duration, whether there had been night-sweating, what type of food induced the pain, together with others of a more intimate nature.

"*Tiens!* but how should one know of such things, gran'mère?" he protested, modestly. "One is not the child's parent!"

"For that at least we may be grateful," commented the old woman, grimly; and asked where, then, were the child's parents, that he so concerned himself with what was obviously not his affair?

He explained that the parents seemed to know as little as himself of the care of sickness, and needed help. "If it were a matter of sheep, or cattle, or horseflesh, one might manage; but a female child——!" He shrugged. "I thought if you could not sufficiently advise me, I would better have in a doctor to her. Or perhaps our Bette, or Esteban's Emilie?"

"A man doctor? I mock myself of it," remarked the matriarch, divesting herself of her work apron. "As to our Bette—you well know that she is a nursing mother; and of Esteban's wife in a sick-room the less said the better, though for one so ignorant she does her possible." She then demanded to know the exact location of these strange parents who had neglected to inform themselves as to the proper care of juvenile illnesses. Her brows met over his reluctant answer.

"What?" she exclaimed, incredulously. "You tell me strangers, persons not Basque, have established themselves in our Val Caché? And you *knew* of this, my son?"

Nacio confessed that he not only knew of it, but had taken them there himself, since they showed need of sanctuary.

She said, sternly; "You have broken trust, as well as breaking our Basque laws! You have be-

trayed what was not yours to betray! For this, suitable punishment will be devised, be assured." Nacio nodded submissively. "Meanwhile, for what purpose do we delay?" She was already putting certain sick-room necessities into a hamper with whose appearance her neighborhood was long and gratefully familiar.

"Gran'mère!" he exclaimed, delighted, "you mean to go with me yourself?"

But naturally, she replied. Who else? And since the emergency seemed urgent, she added with great calm, they would not waste time driving around the mountain—the occasion had arrived to employ Esteban's air-motor.

None of the household suspected what vital matters were afoot until, looking up from various pursuits at the unfamiliar sputter of the ascending biplane, they recognized in its passenger seat the world-going bonnet-basque and enveloping black *capuchon* of their intrepid matriarch.

Before the alarmed wonder of it had subsided, however, she was back again, bearing in her arms an excited, over-flushed, very sick little stranger, who greeted the staring Urruty children surprisingly by name; and a few more hours found them at the nearest hospital of Bagnères-de-Luchon, since in any use of the knife Madame Urruty conceded

to man a certain hereditary superiority. Appendicitis was one of the modern maladies which she frankly admitted to be beyond her scope.

The terrified mother had let her child be taken from her without protest, almost eagerly, once she realized that the plane could carry but one passenger. That passenger must, she knew, be the brusque, laconic, strangely gentle old woman to whom Mari-flor went with eagerness, nestling her pain-racked little body into arms that seemed its appointed resting-place. All Rosemary said was, dazedly: "You will not let them hurt her, will you? Or frighten her? She's never been away from me an hour in her life!"

To which Madame Urruty replied simply that she would deal with the child as with her own, adding in her clear, quaintly-accented English: "Illness, madame, is our woman's battlefield, *hein?* where officers and soldiers fight all together to make victory. I, my daughter, happen here to be an officer, you a soldier. It is necessary to be of stout heart. *Soyez tranquille!*"

Rosemary nodded without speaking; she would have liked, had she dared, to kiss the hand of this old warrior mother to show how utterly she trusted her. There were not many people who could resist the encouragement of Madame Urruty's smile.

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When she had watched the plane out of sight, Rosemary turned for sheer need of comfort to her husband; who had already started off however, in his aimless hurried fashion, to what he called his work—that utterly unimportant delving into layers of the past; suitable occupation enough, she thought in agonized impatience, for those who are already done with the terrible business of living.

It was Etcheverray, not Nacio, who brought first news of Mariflor's progress, waving quick reassurance to her as soon as he came within sight. Mariflor was already recovering normally from a very successful operation, he reported; but meanwhile Nacio dared not leave her—the child would not let him out of reach. Madame Urruty sent word that with the parents' permission she preferred to take the child back to her own house for convalescence, where conditions were more favorable to recovery.

Rosemary agreed without question. She agreed, too, when Nacio at last came in to her, that there was no need to bring the child back again to the Val Caché, since she seemed perfectly content where she was.

"But doesn't she miss me, then, at all?" questioned the mother, a little catch in her voice which the young man missed.

"Children so easily adapt themselves," shrugged

Nacio, with his own unconscious young cruelty. "She enjoys, naturally, companionship of her own age. If sometimes at night one hears her whimpering a little, it is enough to go and lie beside her on the bed, and soon she sleeps again. She is quite used to me, of course."

Rosemary pictured the two heads laid beside each other on the same pillow, one so small and smooth and bright, the other dark with its tousled boyish curls; and the heart within her grew big with those sacrificial thoughts which come easily to mothers. What happened to her hereafter could not matter very greatly; what mattered was her child's welfare, and Nacio's. Youth must be served. * * * She offered suddenly, eagerly, to be ready to go away with him when he came for her again.

Near the valley's exit, that day, Nacio was rather disconcerted to encounter the indifferent husband, apparently awaiting him there, wanting, no doubt, news of his child. But he said, surprisingly, "Ur-ruty . . . I'd like to say good-by to you now."

For one startled, incredulous moment the boy wondered whether his life-long confidant, Etcheverray, might possibly have betrayed his plan. The American went on speaking, no longer with his usual dull apathy but quite clearly and concisely, although stuttering a little with embarrassment.

"I want to say good-by, and—and thank you! Don't think I've been unaware of what you've done for all of us. This season of blessed security has given me time to think. I know now—I've known all along, for that matter!—what I must do. Only—I couldn't bear to think of my wife and child the unprotected wife and child of a jailbird. Now it's different. I need not worry about them any more, need I? So I'm going back. After eight years of it, eight years of dodging and hiding like a hunted rat—God! I mean to give myself up and take my punishment."

He went on, ignoring Nacio's amazed protest; "It's what she has wanted me to do from the first—she's a good sport, Rosemary! I think perhaps you'll like to know that she's never profited by my—my mistakes. In fact, there was nothing to profit by; it all went, trying to make more. No matter why!—a man who marries a woman so much younger than himself, a girl he loves as I have loved Rosemary—wants naturally to give her what he can, even what he can't!"—He paused again, and swallowed. "Never mind all that. What I'm trying to tell you is that the money we've been living on is hers, money she earned herself; and it's nearly gone. So—something must be done, you see!"

Nacio remained silent, trying to reconstruct this

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furtive, negligible, vaguely piteous figure into something that was neither furtive nor negligible.

"I've tried," went on the other, stumbling with his hurried speech, "to make amends in the only way I knew, by—well, by dissociating myself from them, by leaving you a clear field, Urruty. I saw more than you realized, more perhaps than she saw herself.—She's been in love with you, of course, from the first."

Nacio gave a dismayed exclamation. He tried to protest, to deny such a possibility, and suddenly saw that he could not.

The husband almost smiled over his confusion. "Never mind. It's quite all right; it's natural! I know where I can trust, Urruty. Perhaps you haven't known," he went on, stoically, "that in my part of the country a penitentiary sentence automatically gives a man's wife grounds for divorce? So—that's that!"

Nacio still remained silent. He did not know quite how to explain that in his own country no law nor possible grounds for divorce gives right of remarriage to a woman who has a husband living.

The American added, with a deep breath of relief: "I have consulted your friend Etcheverray, who has most kindly offered to arrange everything, who will come in a day or so to get me out of here.

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You need know nothing further, when Rosemary questions you—as she surely will! She’s been a loyal wife to me, Urruty ——” his face quivered a little. “She gave up many things, friends, family, her career, to share my exile. I am afraid, even now, she would not let me go back to—face things alone, if she knew. Of course I need not ask your promise of secrecy?”

Nacio gave the promise, rather dazed. He could think of nothing further to say except, as he held out his hand, “One regrets, monsieur, not to have known you better!”

“Thanks. That’s all right,” muttered the other, and turned awkwardly away. * * *

Nacio found himself in somewhat of a dilemma. To rescue ladies in distress at the point of a knightly spear was a very different matter from having them presented as gifts, in fee simple; and that the object of his chivalry had fallen in love with him merely added to his deep embarrassment. Love, he thought with some momentary distaste, appeared to be an uncontrollable weakness of the sex!—Nor could be put out of mind the thought of a fellow creature, a free man like himself, deliberately abandoning freedom, his God-given right to the sun and wind and sky, in order to immure himself in some noisome dungeon—the Basque idea of prison-life being some-

what archaic. Greatly as he pitied his friend Rosemary, it was to her husband that he found his sympathies veering now; since the unfortunate fellow was, after all, a man, and therefore less well equipped than women for the bearing of long adversity.

He would have liked again to consult Etcheverray, an authority above all on affairs of chivalry; but their neighbor had already absented himself, upon what kindly errand Nacio could guess. He could not even take the dilemma to his spiritual adviser, Père Marcós, since another's secret was no matter for the confessional. Mariflor was his sole solace; Nacio's *fillette* as she was known to the family, already able to climb from her bed onto his knee as by divine right, that she might nestle her head into its accustomed hollow above his silver rib. "Does it hurt you *very* much?" she was wont to inquire, anxiously, poking at the injury to reassure herself.

When he went at last for Rosemary however, on the day appointed, his purpose had clarified itself. If he could never become to her the tender husband that was obviously expected of him, nor even the type of unasking lover demanded by *haute chevalerie*, he would have at least his wished-for fatherhood without marriage, he could prove himself the devoted protector of her child. * * *

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But as he came again into the Val Caché, its wide emptiness struck him like a sudden blow. Nobody ran out to welcome him, except the gibbering half-wit servant, the fierce young sheep-dog who whined with anxiety at his approach. Something had happened here. He called aloud in a sort of panic: "Rosemary! *Qu'avez-vous donc?*"—knowing instinctively that there would be no answer. He could not understand what the frightened Catalan was trying to tell him, pointing: "*Musica, ven aca, la musica*"—until he came upon her letter, laid significantly upon her phonograph, on a record whose airy echoes seemed not to have quite yet died out of the silent valley; it was "*L'Après-midi d'un Faune*."

She had gone, the letter told him, with her husband, who had tried to slip away without her knowing. "As if I could have let him!" she wrote. "As if any wife would not have known! Oh, Nacio, I cannot bear to hurt you—but this is the way I shall hurt you least, believe me! And I'm leaving you my Mary-flower, the best I've got to give—all I've got. Keep her for me till I can take care of her again—God knows when that may be! My child will be safer with you, I know, than in any convent, safer even than with her mother now."

She would have given him, she said, anything else she could, herself included. "And I could have

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made you rather happy, too—but just happiness isn't always best for people, not for such people as you and me. For us, dreams are safer than reality. Do you understand, I wonder? Oh, Nacio, my dear, have I done well?"

The letter was signed simply, "For Remembrance."

After a while the boy lifted his bewildered head, and answered low to the surrounding emptiness, "You have done well."

But not until the half-wit servant, watching him, began suddenly to blubber in loud sympathy, not until the whimpering sheep-dog came to his knee to offer her fealty of shared sorrow, did Nacio quite understand what had happened to himself; what thing it was that he should have always to remember with Rosemary.

I N S H A L L A H





III

INSHALLAH

PEOPLE of the Urruty neighborhood became in time accustomed to the rather odd apparition of their alcalde's son, young Nacio, that distinguished former ace of the French flying service, wandering about the countryside patiently endeavoring to moderate his free Basque stride to the skipping pace of a little foreign girl-child; further attended by a fierce young

Briard she-dog, and also, surprisingly, by a large unwieldy Berkshire hog—nosing and grunting along at heel, as the villagers were wont to comment, like any Christian. This was the pig, Pinky, no longer the engaging curly-tailed shoat Nacio had once abstracted from the family hog-pens as a gift to Rosemary's child, but who retained still a sentimental craving for human companionship. Mariflor took her affections where she found them, the more the better.

Nacio and his *fillette*—it was a combination that rather touched those whom it did not annoy; among which latter might be counted his outspoken grandmother. "Books, music, infantile society—what occupations for a full-grown man of the Eskualdunak, who has won his *Croix de Guerre!*" she muttered to her American granddaughter-in-law. "*Peste!* the *fainéant* might as well become a priest and have done with it!"

"Give him time, *madre,*" sighed Emily. "He is grieving still for those poor lost friends of his."

"*Sans doute!* But to grieve for what is beyond help is not our custom," said the old Basquaise, stoutly. "One burns the necessary candles, one has a proper number of masses said—more is inutile. *Tiens!* He was not even the unfortunate woman's lover!"

"How," questioned the other, "do you know that?"

"Has he not confessed as much to Tubal Etcheverray? The boy does not lie!"

"Not even in such affairs?"

"*Pas possible!* He has not," shrugged the old woman, "sufficiently the habit of the world."

"Perhaps," suggested Esteban's wife, quietly, "he was her lover in a sense you Europeans, even Basques, seem unable to understand—the American sense, *madre*."

"*Zut!* You fancy love to be a question of nationality? Either a man so desires a woman as to take her when possible, or—he does not so desire her."

"Or—perhaps he loves her enough not to take her, even when possible, and goes on 'desiring' all his life," mused Emily.

A smile of incredulity narrowed the other's old shrewd eyes. "When you have borne and nourished as many of the sex as I, *ma fille*, you will comprehend that such fidelity is the property of dogs and females, not of men."

"What about Etcheverray's life-long devotion to his Madame Pilar?"

"Ah, that!"—the smile broadened kindly. "Since she never became his Madame Pilar, he has transformed her into a book, the most treasured of his

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volumes, with flowers of souvenir pressed between the pages.—Our Nacio runs blood in the veins, however; not ink!”

Whatever ran in his veins just then ran heavily enough. It is said by people who know battlefields that at first the shock of a deep wound anæsthetizes its pain. Not until after Rosemary was gone from him irretrievably did Nacio suspect how closely she had been knit into the weaving fabric of his life. He had but to close his eyes to see, far more clearly than he had seen them in the flesh, the courageous, wistful smile of her, the sweet lips, the burnished gleam of her hair; whenever he thought of her, it was to haunting echoes of her music; Debussy, Grieg, César Franck. She had brought to his sensitive youth a beauty which would never quite leave it, that beauty whose undertone is minor, the tragedy of eternal evanescence which makes of Spring a season so much more poignant than Autumn.

From the first there had been, as Nacio understood in the retrospect, the unmistakable presage of doom about his summer's idyll in the Val Caché. Rosemary herself must have been conscious of it; he recalled her fear of the displeasure of the ancient gods whose sanctuary they had invaded, her prophetic writing of farewell when she left him her child; “My Mary-flower will be safe with you—

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safer than with her mother now." Nor did he find himself greatly surprised, despite the shock of it, by news which presently came back to them. * * * The ship upon which Rosemary with her husband had sailed for America to face his punishment, a small Spanish liner out of Vigo, had been wrecked in a fog collision off the Newfoundland Banks. Though most of the passengers were saved, Mariflor's parents were not among them.

The little creature had at least one thing to remember with pride of her unhappy father—the manner of his death. It had its brief moment in the world's press; the story of how an American passenger, pulled unwillingly into a rescue boat, had immediately jumped back into the sea in search of his missing wife, had gone swimming about desperately searching amid the floating wreckage, until at last he could no more be seen. The name entered in the passenger list was not the one written in certain papers and other things reclaimed for Mariflor from the little house in Andorra; but neither Nacio nor Etcheverray, also their friend, felt any doubt as to the identity of this husband who sacrificed his life for the wife who had sacrificed hers to him.

"Courage should always come easily to you, my Mary-flower, who are the child of such heroic

parents," Nacio had said, when he told the little girl of her double loss; and she had nodded, mute, winking very hard and stiffening the soft childish chin to prove that she, too, was made of hero stuff. Indeed, the kind and pitying folk about her were not a little shocked to see what slight apparent effect the tragedy had upon the child; who must, they thought, be of a more shallow and unfeeling nature than Basque children.

Nacio could have told them otherwise. Often at night, when he sat reading very late as was his wont before the fire, he would be startled by a tremulous whisper at his elbow: "Please, Nacio, could I come and sit on you awhile?" And he would hold the small nightgowned figure close, in silence, until its trembling ceased, and his *fillette* grew heavy against his shoulder and could be carried back to the great nursery room with its four big beds, one in each corner, where the Urruty young of all ages and sexes slept companionably together.

Not many detached bachelors in their twenties find themselves called upon to be mothers to homesick little orphan girls; yet it was a rôle Nacio did not care to relinquish to others more expert in maternity. For at such moments the love he had denied came mystically close to him, so close, indeed, that sometimes, drowsing himself perhaps, he dreamed

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that it was Rosemary he held so gently in his arms, instead of only her Mary-flower.

It was this belated realization of love which added a certain element of shame to Nacio's grief for his lost friend; the thought that he could have let her go from him without knowing—or did she know? Sometimes he thought she must have known; thought that this was perhaps the true reason of her going—in order that their unspoken passion might suffer upon it no stain of earth, but remain always a thing intangible as starlight and flower scent, as those faint remembered harmonies which were about him whenever he closed his mortal eyes and bade the world be still.

He came in time to feel that the child was indeed his child, the one Rosemary should have borne to him out of their secret spiritual union there in the Val Caché; so that he kept the little creature always near him, rarely out of his sight in that first year; and would have taken steps legally to adopt her had not his shrewd grandmother, for reasons of her own, bade him wait.

"It has never been our custom, nor our necessity, to adopt children not of our blood, my son! Also, her own people may yet arrive to claim her."

"They will not—and they need not!" replied Nacio, jealously. "She belongs to me by gift."

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"That is as may be," was the guarded reply. "One conceives that a young woman—particularly a young woman out of America, *mon fils*—may very well one day resent having been given as gift to a family not of her own choosing."

"But it will be a long while before the little one becomes a young woman, *madre!*"

"The thing is nevertheless inevitable," commented his ancestor, dryly.

Adopted or not, Mariflor regarded herself as entirely Nacio's property. No matter how agreeable others made themselves to her—and there was marked rivalry in the family for the favors of the lovely, confiding little creature; no matter how contentedly she happened to be playing with the more sturdy Urruty young, who regarded her as a superior sort of Queen Titania materialized out of picture-books for their benefit—at sight or sound of Nacio approaching, she left whatever she was doing to attach herself to his person as unobtrusively as a shadow. In fact there were times when he appeared to regard her as though she were indeed a shadow; which troubled Mariflor not at all. She was quite content to be his favorite companion if only for the modest reason that she interfered less than others with the current of his secret thoughts.

There was, with the exception of her orphan-

hood, nothing in the least piteous about Mariflor. Nacio had done his best to make a sporting companion of his *fillette*, taught her to run and ride and swim and play until she became as hardily vigorous as any of the young Urruty, despite her look of exotic delicacy. Health was rather a fetish in that family. Nevertheless, there was always something that set her apart from other children; an extreme sensitiveness to beauty, so that a rare sunset would put her into a sort of trance during which she could neither talk nor eat; an almost passionate devotion to what she called her "b'longings"—the dog, the pet pig, the few trifles brought to her from the little house in Andorra which her wandering parents had last called home. Among these "b'longings" was her mother's phonograph, with its cherished musician's records, played by tacit consent only when the two were alone together, as in memoriam. Sometimes that busy Basque household, intent upon its practical affairs, would pause involuntarily in passing the closed door of Nacio's private sanctum, struck by the quality of the music which issued from it; accompanied more often than not by the odd wandering dissonances of Nacio's shepherd flute, or perhaps by a high, clear, childish soprano, faultlessly true as the flute itself, and of a curious carrying power.

Among this unsuspected audience happened to be,

on occasion, Bette's husband, the painter John de Maytie, still known to the valleys thereabouts as "Jaun-Smeet," who alone of the family found nothing morbid or even odd in Nacio's abstraction and habitual indifference to things that seemed to them important. John was in his rather shy and quiet way a great admirer of his puzzling young brother-in-law.

"The sorrowful great gift," he quoted once to Tubal Etcheverray, who nodded. "I wonder which form it is going to take?"

"What matter," commented the savant, "so long as it takes form at all?"

It was the painter who brought Nacio a present one day, a number of large white paper tablets and a box of sharpened pencils.

"For me, Jaun-Smeet? But what am I to do with them?" asked Nacio, in surprise.

The other shrugged. "Nice paper," he suggested, "is useful for many things—to draw upon, to write upon, to make into paper families for little girls to play with."

"*Tiens!* But what could I find to write about, me?" questioned Nacio, ignoring other suggestions; which told the painter much.

"Never stop to think of that, or you are lost!" he advised, quite seriously. A few days later, however, he noticed Mariflor and the other children

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playing with a distinguished new assortment of paper dolls, and knew that the time was not yet. * * *

The Urruty family, unaccustomed to lovelorn young mystics in their midst, were somewhat relieved one day when distraction arrived for Nacio in the form of a friend he had made during his late service in Africa—one Nasir ben Hamed, a smart young Spahi officer clad in the smartest of French civilian dress, even to eyebrow mustache and chyprescented handkerchief; who tenderly embraced his companion-at-arms on either cheek in Gallic fashion, salaamed Orientally before the matriarch, shook hands heartily in the English manner with Esteban and John de Maytie, and on the appearance of Pedro Urruty and their neighbor, Etcheverray, seized each of these older gentlemen to kiss him respectfully upon the head—somewhat to the dismay of modest Basques, unaccustomed to Oriental demonstration.

“But name of a name, what do you do here, my Hamed?” cried Nacio, under whose delighted back-thumpings the more slenderly built young Moslem staggered. “And why no longer in uniform?”

The other remarked with a shrug that one could not go on forever serving the wars of France, particularly since there were for the moment no wars to serve. His military usefulness ended, he was at present a man of peace, who sought to amuse him-

self as such a one should. "And are not you the cherished companion of my soul," he demanded, with unblushing Eastern fervor, "without whom time has been but as the desert? Where else should I be than here? Especially," he added, composing his cheerful features to a suitable degree of melancholy, "since, from what your letters tell me and do not tell me, I guessed that you also have need of recreation—yes?"

"I have need of something, certainly," admitted Nacio, soberly. "But I think it may be of work, Hamed, rather than of recreation."

"Work? What an idea!" the African protested, shrugging to his ears. "Is a man, then, no better than a dromedary, to run and run upon the world's errands until it expires upon the sands out of sheer ennui? *Na, na*, friend of my soul! One has nobler aspirations than the camel. Eh?"

While he spoke, the eye of this noble aspirant—a bland, guileless black orb that moved in its socket with singular ease and smoothness—had missed no feminine detail about him: not the slim American *chic* of Esteban's wife, nor the sweet, grave young maternity of Bette, nor the somewhat excessive plumpness of Nacio's French mother—upon which it lingered for a moment's approval; and came to rest finally, with warm attention, upon the shyly

staring little girls of the family, particularly upon Mariflor.

"*Allah kerim*, what a hair!" he murmured fervently. "Our *hennayas* would give their lives for the secret of such dye! *Mezzian bessaf*—what beauty! A little more enlargement of the contours, a few kilos of increase upon the frame, and you will have there one day something very nice," he murmured to Nacio, thoughtfully. "Something very nice indeed!"

Nacio smiled, frowning a little at the same time. "This is my *fillette*," he said, drawing the child close to him. "My foster daughter, Hamed. We find her very well as she is."

The Spahi smote himself sympathetically upon the brow. "Your foster daughter? But, I remember!—your souvenir, your little present from the dead? Prophet's beard, to be saddled already with a family! Yet—what a family! Come, little flower bud, little golden lamp of love, come hither, then." He held out an enticing hand, to which Mariflor went without hesitation; she had no shyness of strangers who called her by such pleasant names.

Emily, watching, controlled a slight movement of distaste; but the Moslem's finger tips passed quite reverently over the little girl's cheek, her soft lips, her smooth, shining head. "Firm as the flesh

of lotus petals," he pronounced, with the manner of a connoisseur. "The hair purest silk, the body already of tender line, vase-shaped, nothing stiff and angular like an English *mees*——"

It was Madame Urruty who arrested this panegyric, rather brusquely. "Go now, *petite*—'Cadie, Wally, all of you, go away to your play! The child is very young, as you see, monsieur," she added, "and unaccustomed to compliment."

"She will not long remain unaccustomed to compliment!" prophesied the Moroccan; and before the children were well out of earshot he turned to Pedro Urruty, as head of the house, and offered obligingly to take the orphan off his hands. "Since my friend Nacio has as yet no establishment in which to house her, and since you, Sidi, seem to have already many girl-children in your *andurun*, perhaps it would please you to let the little copper-haired one come to my house near Tetuan, to be brought up by my father's women?"

"To what end, monsieur?" quietly asked Pedro, shaking a warning head at Emily's start of dismay.

"That I may have her to wife when of the proper age," was the simple reply. "I have not as yet taken myself a wife—as you may know, we Berbers rarely permit ourselves more than one; and I have not hurried. Allah gives many days! One has considered

latterly a certain daughter of my uncle, the Lalla Meimouna, who is reported to be the fairest flower of Morocco. But"—he shrugged—"I have no great fancy for our Moroccan flowers, me; they are too brunette; and to marry from a family *andurun* a girl one has played with familiarly as a child—truly, what novelty offers in that? Eh no; I have long had the envy to marry myself a *Roumiya*, a European. In our family we like very much Europeans," he explained, engagingly. "Being Berber, we are not too strict Mohammedans, you comprehend; we eat of pig occasionally, we sip our wines; we have little prejudice against Europeans, even as head wives. Therefore ——"

Here Emily Urruty was no longer able to restrain her mounting indignation: "As it happens, Mariflor isn't a European, but an American child," she said, crisply, "who has been put into our protection, and will remain there. And I confess that we Christians seem to have more prejudice than you Mohammedans against marrying persons of another—faith!" She had almost said "color."

"So?" The Moor, since the male head of the house made no comment, bowed surprised submission to this unseemly female interference. "*Tanjib*—as you will. May the Sitt's greatness be increased," he murmured, politely; which was not quite the

courtesy to pay a young American matron whose treasured slimness was just beginning to take on the more gracious curves of maturity.

It was indeed the beginning of a slight feeling between the two, less of enmity than of mutual wariness. Emily Urruty was unaccustomed to being regarded entirely as background by agreeable young men who came her way; and that Nasir Ben Hamed was an agreeable young man there could be no denying. His manners were a pleasing mixture of Oriental naïveté with Gallic finesse; his skin had none of the Othello-like blackness so disturbing to American taste—in fact, he was little browner than either sunburnt Nacio or her own Esteban; the habitual expression of his face, that combination of pride, indifference, and faint scorn usual to Moslems of high caste, gave way, when he smiled, to a delightful childish confidence. His obvious devotion to his friend was disarming, too—he and Nacio had formed a Damon and Pythias intimacy at the Tangier hospital where the young aviator was recovering from his various war injuries at the time Ben Hamed was brought in, half blinded by one of the acute eye-affections common to those who spend much time in the desert. Nacio had volunteered to lessen their mutual boredom of convalescence by reading aloud to the other, thereby adding appreciably to

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the Moor's acquaintance with French and English—a charity which earned Nacio a gratitude almost embarrassing in its fervor. This had taken tangible form from time to time in the shape of handsome gifts, which Nacio, aware of Oriental custom, had been at pains promptly to return in kind; so that the friendship was never allowed to lapse. But Emily viewed it with surprised misgivings.

“What,” she demanded of Madame Urruty, “do you suppose our Nacio—Nacio of all people!—finds congenial in the company of that wily, oily-eyed young pride of the harem, *madre*?”

To which the family oracle replied without apparent concern, even with a grim chuckle: “While he is no doubt a sad rascal, this Ben Hamed, the company of rascals offers necessary *divertissement* to those of a too-serious habit, no? He will do our *doguin* small harm, perhaps; on the contrary!”

Emily, nevertheless, took it upon herself to see that the little girls of the family—Nacio's young sisters, home from their convent for the holidays; her own enterprising Leocadie; above all, Mariflor—were kept out of their guest's way. She could not forget the quick anxiety that came into the latter's trustful eyes when she overheard Ben Hamed's proposition to Nacio's father.

“Why did that strange dark man want to take

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me away to his house?" Mariflor had demanded as soon as they were alone together; the two compatriots being on confidential terms.

"He thought he'd like you to be his little girl, dear, instead of Nacio's," explained Emily, lightly.

"But Nacio wouldn't let me, would he?" The child was trembling a little, and Emily held her close.

"Of course not, Mariflor baby!—he won't even let that strange man look at you again, if you'd rather not," she soothed; having known what it was herself to be a beautiful child too little protected from appraising male gaze.

"I don't mind if he just *looks* at me," conceded Mariflor graciously, reassured, "if he just doesn't touch me, please, Aunt Emily!"—and the other realized with dismay how the child had grown during the past year; less in stature or appearance than in feminine instinct, ripened precociously, perhaps, by acquaintance with grief, as fruits ripen under an early frost. To know, at eleven years, that it was not well to be touched by such hands as Nasir Ben Hamed's—! Emily was glad, at least, that she had one supporter in her distaste for the engaging Moslem.

All the others seemed to have fallen under his spell; partly, no doubt, for business reasons. Basques,

like Scots, invariably put business before pleasure; and it turned out that Ben Hamed was not the elegant idler he had at first represented himself to be, having been sent into Spain as an expert cavalryman to purchase mules and horses suitable for military requirements.

"Military requirements? But you told me you had completed your army service," commented Nacio, in surprise.

His friend explained that the animals were to be purchased for a certain Riff relative, one Nasir el Nahabi, Grand Caid of the Cabila Beni Urriaguel. "Not at war for the moment even with the Spanish, whom Allah curse," he hastened to add, with his usual bland candor. "My uncle, however, takes pains to remain at enmity with certain neighboring tribesmen, else whom would there be to raid?" The nickname "el Nahabi," he explained further, was an inherited one of several generations, meaning "the Robber." "Naturally no longer appropriate, but—we are still children of battle, we Nasir."

He looked like anything but a child of battle as he sat among them, almost effeminately slender by contrast with the tall muscularity of Nacio; making his elaborate Gallic gestures, handling his food with a meticulous delicacy not Gallic, which sug-

gested a somewhat recent acquaintance with knife and fork—implements which aristocratic Moslems consider inelegant, preferring to manipulate their food with a crust held in three fingers of the right hand.

"Is your uncle, the Caid, father to the beauteous Lady Maymoon?" inquired Emily, who had been rather struck by the Moorish girl's name.

"The same, Sitt," replied Ben Hamed, smiling at her impressionistic translation of it. "And truly, one can but pity that unfortunate Meimouna, who has been brought up like myself, in civilization"—he complacently fingered his mustache—"and is now, having reached her marriage age, kept like a prisoner in my uncle's rough hill *kasbah* till a suitable husband be found for her! However, that should not be long. She is an heiress and most beautiful; in a simple and modest way, you comprehend. No—how shall I say?—no *mondaine chic*, like that of madame herself!" He bowed politely to Emily.

The matriarch commented, thoughtfully, herself struck by a name he had used: "Urriaguel?—surely that is a word of Basque origin, rather than of Saracen?"

Pedro Urruty reminded his mother that their guest was not Saracen, since true Moors were of the white Caucasian stock, like their own.

"*Ma foi*, no!—I am not of the East, me, but a man of the Maghreb, Land of the West—what you of Europe call 'Morocco.' We have a saying with us," said Ben Hamed, informatively, "that 'Tunisians are women, Algerians gentlemen, but Berbers are men!'—Even as our Basque cousins." Again he bowed, politely.

Madame Urruty, looking him over with the rather alarming frankness of which she was on occasion capable, voiced the thought common to all present: "You do not appear to be cousin of ours, young sir! The hands, the feet—*tiens!* they might belong to a female. As to the eye—it is no proper sea eye, but the eye of a desert blackamoor!"

"Ah, truly! That is because I am not pure Berber," their guest admitted, with regret. "My mother was Arab."

"So even Berbers do condescend occasionally to take wives out of the lesser orders?" inquired Emily, impelled to the rudeness by a prejudice she could not master; and had her punishment in his courteous reply: "Wives rarely, madame; concubines, yes. My mother happened to be a slave-woman.—Even as was the mother of Mohammed," he added reassuringly, sensing a certain embarrassment in the air.

Emily's curiosity conquered her dismay. "Slavery is not yet forbidden, then, in your country?"

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"Certainly, madame—and has been for almost as long a time as with you of America." He gave his slightly ironic bow. "But in the savage interior, who is to enforce great obedience to law? Parents sell their own children, naturally, as they wish; a good healthy girl may still be bought for sixty duros or so. My mother, however, was of a value somewhat greater, being a white-skinned woman of extreme beauty. It is from her," he added, modestly, "that I inherit my appearance."

"And your father"—Emily cast delicacy to the winds, since none seemed to be required here—"has acknowledged you legally as his son?"

"But naturally. I *am* his son!" replied Ben Hamed, with some surprise; and Emily saw that she had still much to learn of aristocratic Mohammedan custom.

Afterwards Nacio said to his sister-in-law, reproachfully: "You wished to hurt our guest, Emilie! Why?"

"I don't know, and I'm sorry," she confessed. "Only—I seem to have appointed myself watchdog-in-chief to this family, old dear, and there's something about the fellow I don't quite trust. Oh, Nacio!—do you?"

"He is my friend," replied the young Basque, sufficiently.

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Days, even weeks, passed before Nacio's friend spoke of departure; but it was a time full of interest to the hospitable Urruty, since Ben Hamed was, like many of his race, a vivid raconteur. Night after night they listened enthralled, and many of the neighbors with them, to his accounts of life in that continent which looms, ever dark and mysterious, on the far side of the middle ocean which so narrowly divides its strangeness from the comparative familiarities of Spain. He spoke little of the Riff, despite interested efforts to make him do so; a violent sort of country, he described it disparagingly, quite uncivilized, where dwelt a barbarous and violent people like his own uncle, the Grand Caid, who lorded it in his rough hillside *kasbah* like a robber baron of mediæval times, preying on travelers of the highroad.

"Only his highroad is the high sea, for the cove below may shelter in concealment as many as fifty fast little sailing vessels." Ben Hamed paused abruptly, as if he had said rather too much.

The Urruty men exchanged glances; it was not for them, whose ancestry had sailed with that most celebrated of corsairs, Michel the Basque, to censor the racial customs of others. "The *rais* of the old Barbary Coast," commented Pedro, politely, "believed that in robbing enemies of Mohammed they

were doing for their faith only what the Christian crusaders did for our own. No?"

"Even so, Sidi!" Ben Hamed shot him a grateful look. "But that time has passed, naturally," he added, faintly sighing, "since no sailing-vessels may now compete with steam."

Madame Urruty observed him curiously; it seemed to her that in talking of these things their guest had a look somewhat less effete and languid than at first impression. "Your uncle the Caid was perhaps one of Raisuli's followers?" she inquired, presently.

Hamed's bland gaze flickered. "Who knows what such a one may have been? He is an ignorant old barbarian, no man of civilization like myself!—who have served, madame," he reminded her, rather irrelevantly, "as an officer of the French army."

The old woman nodded, satisfied that Ben Hamed's uncle, nicknamed "the Robber," was not the only member of his family who had seen service under the bandit Riff outlaw, Raisuli; a surmise which appeared to raise rather than lower their guest in her estimation.

Ben Hamed described for them with more freedom other regions of Africa; strange grass-grown inland seas where Jason and his Argonauts came seeking their Golden Fleece, and lingered too long

because of sirens; the Land of the Lotus-eaters celebrated by Tennyson, where grows that curious herb which gives death by poisoning through slow sleep; a country of dwarfs who live beneath the earth like moles and blink in the daylight, almost blind; cliff-dwellings that rise unexpectedly from the desert like the apartment houses of a city, up whose tall façades the dwellers must climb like monkeys to reach their doors, since there are no stairs. He told them of the hideous self-tortures administered in the name of religion by dervishes of the sect of Hamachas, or Aissouans; of the black magic practiced by a tribe of desert gypsies, the Mlaina, who are even better sorcerers than other gypsies. He spoke, with an Oriental candor at which his modest Basque audience did not blench, since such matters seemed as alien to reality as fantasies of nightmare, of that strange tribe of dancing-women, the Ouled Nails, who go down in early youth to the coastal cities—"Where there are always many Christians," added Ben Hamed, blandly—to sell their beauty in the market place, returning always after a certain time to marry with men of their own tribe, as welcome and unashamed as merchants returning with well-earned gains from foreign parts. He told them, too, of that mysterious desert folk, the Touaregs, the fiercest and most dangerous fanatics in Africa, who go always veiled like

women, and practice at home a gently monogamous existence, even to the point of romance; devoted to song and poetry, holding indeed a yearly poetic contest on the order of the European troubadour Courts of Love.

"Like our Jeux Floreaux at Toulouse," exclaimed Nacio in surprise.

"And why not?" shrugged the Mussulman, "since they, like ourselves, like you Basques, are of the ancient race—the Tehennon, or red people—who brought such arts into Europe with them, from beyond." His gesture vaguely indicated the direction of the Atlantic Ocean.

"From beyond?" repeated Emily Urruty, curiously. "Not America, certainly! Can you possibly mean—Atlantis?"

But this Ben Hamed could not say; Atlantis appeared to be a region unknown to him. "I am no bookman, like Nacio here," he admitted, deprecatingly. "In our *medersas* the study of the Koran is considered to be sufficient." He could only tell her what was known to many ancient men of his people, that the Touaregs, like the Berbers themselves, had inhabited the north of Africa from the two seas to the inner Atlas, long before Queen Dido came to Carthage, or the Ptolemies destroyed with their foolish man-made monuments the illimitable,

timeless mystery of the desert. Inevitably the young man returned in his talk to the desert—dunes that walk, sands that sing in the wind with the voice of a myriad fierce insects; that tumultuous earthen sea by whose sinister magic all Africans are obsessed as sailors are obsessed by ocean.

“And they were, those Tehennon,” he added, somberly, “masters of the world in those days, who kept for themselves all the high places, the fine pasture-lands, the sea roads, leaving the rest for lesser folk, such as Spanish, English, and other *giacours*—whom Allah curse!” There were times when the Berber forgot his Oriental suavity, forgot for the moment even his passionate desire to be mistaken for a Frenchman.

Emily, whose mental associations with Africa had hitherto been only rather primitive ones connected with the Congo and the Sudan, or rather sophisticated ones connected with Shepheard’s Hotel at Cairo, found herself oddly stirred by this very different Africa of Ben Hamed’s conjuring. Nightly, indeed, when he had wearied of story-telling, it seemed to his enthralled listeners that the wide, cool peace of their Pyrenean valley throbbed still to the sinister faint beat of the *derbuchas*—the desert drums—as it must once have throbbed during the passage of Hannibal’s war elephants. * * * So that

none were surprised when, upon the African's final announcement of departure, Nacio expressed his own intention to accompany him.

Madame Urruty nodded briefly, her young old eyes keen with understanding. "*Enfin*," she said. "*Ça commence!* Had I but your years and your sex, my son, you would not accompany your friend alone!"

Only Emily uttered a reminding protest. "But Mariflor, Nacio!—what are you going to do about Mariflor?"

He looked at her, surprised. What better could he do for his *fillette* than leave her as she was, in the excellent care of his own family? The parting would no doubt be difficult for both, he admitted, his face shadowing; he well knew how he would miss this last half-real, half-mystic contact with his lost Rosemary. But the child was, after all, a woman-child; she must learn soon or late her woman's task of adjustment to circumstances.

The parting, however, proved less painful than he had anticipated; for when time came for the young men to leave, Mariflor was not anywhere to be found. It was Emily who, with the aid of the nosing Pinky, discovered her later in the corner of a certain armoire which contained Nacio's discarded effects, old uniforms, wicker *pelota* gloves, ski, and

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so on; crouched there shaken with such dry pitiful sobbing as the news of her parents' death had not wrung from her.

"Oh, Mariflor baby!" whispered Emily as she held the desperate small creature close, her own eyes wet with sympathy, "if only we could learn, we women, to hate the men who make us love them as they sometimes deserve to be hated!"

"But I don't *want* to hate Nacio," sobbed the child. "I only want to be where he is! Oh, Auntie Emily, why wouldn't he take me with him? Why?"

The other replied somberly, as if to one of her own age, with that very masculine verse of Robert Browning:

"Round the cape of a sudden came the sea,
And the sun looked over the mountain rim—
And straight was a path of gold for him,
And the need of a world of men for me."

Word came back to them from Nacio's "world of men" regularly but briefly; he was keeping, he wrote, a notebook for Mariflor's later benefit, a sort of travel album; the thought of which comforted her exceedingly.

"I'll let the rest of you *look* at it," she promised the other children, generously; "maybe I'll let you even *read* in it—but it will belong to me, remem-

ber! I'm going to keep it in my own play house 'mongst my other b'longings."

"Humph!—'mongst your silly old pig and your stupid old doll-babies, I s'pose," commented the young athlete, Leocadie, who scorned such femininities. "You act's if Uncle Nacio was one of your b'longings himself, though he was our uncle before he ever heard of you!"

"That's because I wasn't born yet, maybe," said the other, placidly. "Anyway, he's mine now, and I don't have to call him uncle, either. I call him just 'Nacio.'" From which it may be gathered that Mariflor, despite her precocity in some ways, was still very wholesomely a little girl.

It appeared, from the postmarks of his brief communications, that Nacio was ignoring those parts of Africa upon which his friend had especially preferred to dwell, ignoring even the sinister fascinations of the desert, and was making as directly as possible for that grim inner region of the Riff where, as Ben Hamed had indicated rather strongly, foreigners are not made welcome.

"*Tiens!* Considering our Nacio's late conspicuous exploits among them, he can hardly expect to be received by the *indigènes* with enthusiasm!" commented Esteban, frowning.

"Doubtless the company of his friend, Ben

Hamed, will offer sufficient guaranty of protection," suggested their philosophic father.

But it appeared later that Ben Hamed was no longer with Nacio, had tried in vain to persuade his friend to remain at his own house near the coast, since further entrance into the Riff country was at the moment even less safe than usual because of inter-tribal difficulties. In a letter full of ornate regrets and apologies, the Moslem explained that his friend seemed determined upon reaching a certain outpost, well in the forbidden hinterland, established at their own risk by the White Fathers; that order of French monks who have played so great a part in the slow civilization of the Dark Continent.

This news filled Madame Urruty with odd concern, so that she sent at once for her friend and confessor, Père Marcós, *curé* of the village. "What can you tell me," she demanded, "of my grandson's envy to reach a place which appears to be a species of desert monastery?"

"I will not deny," said the old cleric, beaming at her contentedly, "that it was I who have long advised such a course. Since the boy appeared to suffer undue remorse for certain conduct forced upon him by the exigencies of war ——"

"*Peste!* What he now suffers from," interjected

Madame Urruty, "is chagrin for not having yielded to the exigencies of human affection."

"—— I have therefore counseled him," continued the priest calmly, ignoring such secular interruption, "to purge his conscience by performing, among those he feels himself to have injured, a certain penance of good works. With the *Pères Blancs*, amid the soothing calm of the religious life, I think it probable he will find at last the peace his troubled young spirit seeks, and ——"

He paused abruptly, shocked by the old woman's expression. "Name of ten thousand devils, Marcós Undurraga!—you have dared to counsel my son's son, a shaveling with the mother's milk hardly dry on his lips, to hide sniveling away behind an altar in search of peace?"

"He will spend little time hiding behind an altar, I fear," commented the priest, with dignity. "The *Pères Blancs* are a singularly active order of religious, who find themselves called upon to instruct their savage charges in many things other than our Christian faith—in letters, in medicine, sanitation, agriculture ——"

"And by what right," pursued Madame Urruty, hearing him not at all, "does that troubled young spirit selfishly seek himself out the 'soothing calm

of a religious life,' *heim?*—having already taken upon himself the fathering of a family!"

"One young orphan child, my daughter, hardly constitutes a family. You fear," asked the priest, gravely smiling, "that the little stranger will greatly suffer by being left instead to the fathering of God—with your assistance?"

Madame Urruty hung her head at this, and asked his pardon, and gave him all the money she had by her for his poor. * * * Nevertheless, it was with a certain relief that she received the next rather alarming news of her grandson's prowess. Paris papers reported new outbreaks among the turbulent Riff tribesmen. There had been an attack upon a religious foundation, with three monks of the order of the *Pères Blancs* taken prisoner, also a young penitent among them who went by the name of Frère Ignace.

"Our *doguin*," observed Madame Urruty, grimly, "at least escapes in good time the 'soothing calm of the religious life'!"

But even while prompt negotiations for ransom were being started by the French government, worse tidings came. The three monks, released by the bandits, had found their way back, exhausted though uninjured. But their young companion, not being as yet consecrated to the life of peace, had put up

such a violent and tactless resistance that the monks entertained no hope but that he had of necessity been killed.

The news caused cataclysm indeed in the Urruty household. For the first time in family history, except upon necessary occasions of childbirth, the matriarch took to her bed; from which situation, however, she continued to direct necessary operations as from a throne of state. Certainly one was not ill, she declared, testily; only a trifle over-fatigued by the weight of years, so that it appeared advisable to conserve energy needed for this crisis in family affairs.

Here she was duly waited upon by various important people—Emily was astonished to discover what influence her unpretentious Basque family appeared to wield in the outside world. Not since the kidnapping of the Greek-American Perdicaris, by the bandit Raisuli, had there been such an international hue and cry. The French, the Spanish, and the Papal governments all sent personal representation; Madame Urruty's brother from Guipuzcoa, the rich old shipbuilder Baltasar Jauregui, arrived with his seven sons to offer support in person and in purse. Diplomatic communications kept the mails hot. And one evening there waited upon Pedro Urruty a delegation of men from his own village, to remind

him that they were still *Eschaldene fededen*—Basque and faithful—as in the days when themselves, with others who did not return, had followed him into the trenches of France and out again, shouting their *irrezina* into the face of an ever-retreating foe.

“Since the combined armies of Spain and France seem unable to recover for us this son of our valleys, shall we not, *mon colonel*, proceed under your leadership to recover him for ourselves?” demanded in brief the giant blacksmith who was their sergeant and spokesman.

With his one remaining arm their colonel returned salute in military fashion, unable for the moment to reply otherwise. But Madame Urruty, listening from her bed upstairs, promptly got out of it and came down into her kitchen to make sure such good neighbors were suitably received; so that the evening passed in deep drinking of hydromel, and strong singing of the “*Arbola Santua*,” that hymn to which Basques live and die; with such a shouting of *irrezinas* as might well have struck terror to the heart of the distant Riff.

But since nothing came of it all, Madame Urruty took to her bed again; where her family regarded her with a growing apprehension.

“*Tiens!* How does it happen that she so sorrows

for my son—" whispered Madame Fancine, tearfully, maternal woe for her offspring mingling with maternal jealousy—"when she was ever less kind to him than to others?"

"That is because more was to be expected of him than of others!" replied an unexpected voice from the waxen, heavy-lidded figure on the bed. "He should have brought to our name new credit, that one; we have not before nourished in this family genius. But now—And it was I, I who wished to make of him merely a man like other men!" To their distress, a tear rolled slowly down out of each closed lid over the wrinkled cheeks.

Remorseful Fancine hurried from the room to bring back with her the child Mariflor, who alone of all the household had never given up Nacio for lost. "He *isn't* dead!" she insisted now, as she had insisted stubbornly from the first. "He *couldn't* be dead, gran'mère" (she had adopted Nacio's name for the old lady) "because he promised me he would surely come back for me. He *promised*, gran'mère!"

Madame Urruty's was not the only confidence that had been bolstered up more than once by young Mariflor's. Nacio was not indeed one who easily broke his promises.

That no definite action had been taken by the Urruty themselves, men of action that they were, was

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due to a telegram received after the first alarm from Nasir Ben Hamed, a very urgent telegram, begging them to do nothing until they heard further from himself. They were resigned to difficult patience by memory of the Moslem's chance remark that Riff bandits were often too proud to haggle over such matters as exchange and ransom, preferring to kill their prisoners outright. If Nacio had not been killed, they dared not jeopardize his chances by offending his captors. They decided to leave this anxious and delicate matter in Ben Hamed's hands, as requested.

"I tell you, you are leaving too much to him!" insisted Emily, as time went on. "Ben Hamed's not any too trustworthy!"

"Which is to say that he is Arab," shrugged her husband. "But he is also half Berber, remember. And he loves Nacio."

However, it was not from Ben Hamed that their first reassurance came. One night there appeared at the Urruty door a man who had long been stranger in the neighborhood, a handsome old gypsy *rom* whom Bette greeted with affection as "Papa Matteo," and with whom even Esteban, who hated gypsies as he hated no devil, shook hands when he heard Matteo's news. He had received word through mysterious gypsy channels, said the old chieftain,

that an African tribe of the Romany brethren, the Mlaina, had seen a prisoner answering the description of the missing Basque, still alive, in the Urriaguel district of the Riff.

"Was it you, Matteo Amayo, who requested the Mlaina to hunt for my brother?" demanded Esteban.

"*Avali, rye*," nodded the other, carelessly. "I took that cousinly liberty"—and it was then that Esteban silently shook his enemy's hand.

"Urriaguel! what did I tell you?" cried Emily. "That is Ben Hamed's own *cabila*!"

In response to a curt telegram to the Moslem demanding further information, prompt confirmation came. He had only that day received news, he wrote, by word of mouth from Nacio himself, through one of the runners he, Ben Hamed, had sent throughout the Riff secretly searching for his friend—saying that Nacio was held prisoner by Ben Hamed's barbarian of an uncle, who declined either to release him or to accept ransom. Hamed expressed himself as mortified beyond words by such uncivilized behavior; but Nacio was at least safe, by his own report, and requested his brother to come at once into Morocco, bringing enough money, also one or two ladies of the family.

"'Enough money'—yes, it is certainly Nacio who

speaks there!" grinned Esteban, in delighted relief. "A few thousand francs, or a few million—it is all one to him! But why 'ladies of the family'?"

"He is ill, no doubt, and requires nursing!" exclaimed Bette, laying aside her youngest as if to go at once to her beloved brother.

"*Il ne faut pas se fâcher*. There are nurses nearer than the Pays Basque," mused Madame Urruty, miraculously restored to full efficiency by these tidings. "No, no; more is here than meets the eye! 'Enough money'—for what purpose? I ask myself!"

Emily agreed with her. If Nasir el Nahibi was indeed too proud to accept ransom, why Nacio's sudden need of money? "Ben Hamed himself is in this somewhere, mark my word!" she muttered. "Or else ——"

"Or else again a woman!" finished Madame Urruty, suddenly. "Quite possibly both. Eh, that Nacio, *ses affaires*!"—For a respectable Basquaise of such marked probity of character, reflected Emily, the matriarch had rather a free imagination.

She found herself next, representing "ladies of the family," as requested, immured in the women's quarter of a Moroccan house, in a village near Tetuan, embarked upon the oddest adventure that had fallen to her lot since the great adventure of her own marriage.

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She waited, with what stoic calm she could, in an inner *patio* that might have been one of the enchanted courts of Alhambra, the return of Esteban from the hinterland of the Riff, bringing the missing Nacio.

Emily for once found herself indifferent to the exotic charm of her surroundings; would vastly have preferred to remain aboard Esteban's yacht, the *Gathid*, moored in the all-too-distant port of Ceuta, once the favored retreat of Barbary Coast corsairs, but now seeming to her infinitely safe, even homelike, by comparison with this rambling, sinister, many-roomed Arab house, whose upper stories seemed to extend indefinitely out over the roofs of other houses, over the streets themselves; its corridors peopled by barefooted whispering women wearing full trousers and short red jackets, like the chorus of some Oriental extravaganza, forever salaaming before her, or waving peacock-feather fans at her, or giggling rather impudently behind her back. But she was given no choice as to remaining upon the yacht; since their host, Ben Hamed, offered them hospitality, to refuse would have been a discourtesy they could not afford, explained Esteban, until they had Nacio safe in hand. Her husband's calm reliance upon her for courage equal to his own was always heartening to Emily, even when it most annoyed her.

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Besides the innumerable women servants, Ben Hamed had provided for her especial body-guard and attendant an intelligent Arab lad named Yesu, too young still to be forbidden the *andurun*, or women's quarter of the house, but old enough to offer her proud and faithful protection; also a good deal of interesting information, here and there. Ben Hamed's father, it appeared, was dead, and the son had inherited, with other property, all his father's women—concubines, slaves, and daughters; which accounted for the young man's rather populous *andurun*.

Her own servant, Angelique, the elderly Creole negress who served Emily as maid on occasion now that she was less needed as nurse for Emily's children, was as grateful as her mistress for the male presence of their diminutive protector, having acquired a queer terror of these strangely other Africans among whom she found herself.

"Ef deseyere is real genuwine Af'can folks, den I reck'n I is des plain American!" she muttered, rolling suspicious eyes about her. "Slippity-slippin' roun' de streets in dey nightgownds, with dey faces all wropped up like Ku-Kluxes—huh! Don' look like no niggers *I* hab ebber seed, 'n' dey don' ack like um, 'n' dey don' smell like um, needer! Ner dey don' like us nary bit better'n what we likes dem,

Miss Em'ly, honey. Las' time you 'n' me was out with dat young fella Yeshu, no sooner was you pas' one of dem blind beggars you always gives a copper to, than he ups and spits right behin' yo' back. Yes'm, he sho did! Hi-yi, but I got even with um." Her voice rose in a high negro cackle of laughter. "I spit right back at um, good 'n' hard!—cotch um plumb in the eye, too."

This racial interchange of amenities determined Emily against leaving the house again, even under the able convoy of Angelique and the boy Yeshu. She too had sensed a strong undercurrent of animosity in this remote native suburb where no Europeans appeared to live.

They had been received ceremoniously by Ben Hamed, oddly less effeminate-looking in graceful Arab dress than in his cherished French tailoring, full of eager reassurances as to his dear friend's safety, and overflowing with hospitality. His uncle, the Grand Caid, was even then preparing to journey down from the hills, he informed them, bringing his prisoner with him; which would save Esteban an undesirable journey into the interior.

"You have brought, no doubt, such moneys as Nacio requested?" he added, parenthetically.

Esteban replied with some brevity that any money required would be forthcoming at the proper time.

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"*Monsieur le Caid* has decided, perhaps, to waive his pride sufficiently to accept ransom?" he suggested, dryly.

Ben Hamed shrugged deprecation. Who could tell what such an old barbarian would decide to do? Meanwhile they might comfortably await his arrival at Ben Hamed's own house, here in Wadi Nasir. There was no hurry; Allah gave many days.

Esteban Urruty was, however, rather a sudden man, who had had his fill of Arab procrastination. He preferred, he said briefly, to relieve the Grand Caid at once of his brother's company, in order that he might bring him as soon as possible into the presence of their grandmother, whom anxiety had made ill.

"Ah, the aged Sitt prepares to die?" murmured the Moslem with cordial interest. In that case, they must lose no time indeed; it would be a pity for Nacio to miss the fine funeral celebrations. He himself would accompany Esteban in pursuit of his brother.

"But," he warned, "the journey may be unpleasant, even dangerous, since there is still some prejudice among our ignorant Ruafa against foreigners. And for foreign women," he added, with his eye on Esteban's wife, "it is impossible!"

Therefore Emily waited meekly as she was bid,

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in a *patio* odorous with oleander and mimosa and tuberose, musical with the voice of bulbuls and of muezzin calls from near-by mosques. For exercise she had a larger inner garden, beautiful with blossoming fruit trees, where tame gazelles and flamingoes wandered, and storks descended from the chimney-pots to strut along the edges of a luxurious bathing pool, clapping their beaks like castanets in a sort of ludicrous stately dance. A strange people, she thought, who accept storks and flamingoes as household pets, and relegate the dog to the position of scavenger!

The missing Nacio had left, it appeared, recognizable traces of his passing in Wadi Nasir. Among the other exotic livestock who inhabited her garden, Emily was surprised to encounter a morose and superannuated gray donkey, wandering idly about—not a particularly attractive little beast, even to lovers of horseflesh like her Kentucky-bred self. She was the more surprised in that she understood Moors to have small sentiment for animals which have outlived their usefulness. Her guardian, Yeschu, explained that the little ass was a gift from his master's friend, the Sidi Kebir, and therefore held sacred by the household.—“Kebir” appeared to be the local designation for Nacio, in a country much given to nicknaming.

Upon pressure, Yeshu related the incident of the donkey with relish. The Sidi Kebir, he said, while walking abroad as was his habit, had observed an aged donkey, much overladen, balking stubbornly as wise pack-animals will to indicate that their load is beyond carrying-strength. The Arab owner, however, tried to make it go on, with such angry beating and kicking that it staggered to its knees; whereupon the Sidi had taken the Arab by the slack of his pants and tossed him aside, and begun to unload the animal himself, saying meanwhile, quite reasonably and even gently: "See, your *borrico* is too old to manage such a pack. If you kick him again like that, my friend, I shall find myself compelled to kick you."

The owner, naturally very angry, beat the donkey only the harder, calling aloud upon Allah to witness his insults from a Christian dog; so that a sympathetic crowd began to gather. He, Yeshu, had tried to make the Sidi come quickly away, explaining that since the donkey was the man's property, he had a right to do with it as he willed. Very well, said the Sidi, then he himself would buy the donkey; which he did, paying without question the first ridiculous price named. "And now that it is mine," he had said—Yeshu's eyes shone pleasantly with the recollec-

tion—"I have the right, no doubt, to do what I will to this fellow who has injured my property?"

Never, grinned Yesu, was punishment like unto that. The donkeyman, himself a very good wrestler, had squirmed and writhed in his terror so that the Sidi found it necessary to put forth all his strength to hold him in kicking position. But the Sidi had done so; and certain passing soldiers of the French had kept the crowd from interfering; and in the end, his clothing having given way in the Sidi's hands, the donkeyman was able to crawl off, howling like a beaten dog, while the Sidi led his purchase home to their garden, where it would remain an honored guest until death.—The donkeyman would, no doubt, kill the Sidi when he could, added Yesu simply, but it was this pleasant affair which had given the foreigner in Wadi Nasir his name of "Kebir" or "the Strong One."

Emily laughed over the account, though rather anxiously. She recognized one of the violent berserk rages to which their gentle, abstracted young Nacio was subject on occasion, when aroused by sufficient crisis of emotion. If this was the manner of his penitential progress through Morocco, Emily had a sudden premonitory doubt as to that present safety of which Ben Hamed so confidently assured them.

A few days later Esteban returned, alone except

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for two of Ben Hamed's menservants whom they had taken with them. The Moor, he explained briefly, had suddenly declined to permit his guest to go farther, having received warning that no stranger was safe beyond a certain point. It was at this point, added Steban, very quietly, that they had come upon the first definite traces of Nacio.

"'Steban!—what sort of traces?" Emily asked, alarmed by his expression.

He held a package out to her, without speaking. It contained the shepherd's *chirilion* which Nacio was never without—Emily remembered how she had heard it first, when she came with her lover up into the high Pyrenees, thin, airy, remote as "horns of Elfland faintly blowing." The package also contained a notebook of sorts, badly torn and crumpled, which bore on its flyleaf the English words, FOR MARIFLOR.

"His promised travel-album! But what," she wondered, "are all these rusty brown stains on it?"—and suddenly needed no answer. "Oh, my dear, oh, my dear," she whispered, paling, "have they killed our little brother, then, after all?"

Esteban replied, heavily: "We are not yet sure. Even Ben Hamed is not sure, now. He seems—frightened."

They had come, he told her, to an apparently

deserted village such as one saw everywhere in the Riff, an uneven circle of brown mud-and-boulder hovels, each surrounded by a defense hedge of cactus and aloes, almost invisible until one was close upon it; and in one of the compounds they had found an old brown woman pounding maize in a hollow stone, who at first would not speak to them. An unfriendly folk, the Ruafa, added Esteban; not mentioning that twice his hat had been shot through before he adopted the less conspicuous native headcloth. But when Ben Hamed spoke to the woman in some tongue not understood by Esteban, who knew Arabic, her manner had altered; she had caught up Ben Hamed's hand, respectfully kissing its finger tips; had even run into the house to fetch the things Esteban had brought back. The woman had talked, too, quite freely. It was to her house, she said, that a certain raiding party from above in the hills had brought prisoners, three of them holy men of the infidels, wearing their white priest robes, the fourth much younger, a fighting-man, not in priest robes. The latter they had flung, bound hands and feet together, near her fire, since they wished to keep him alive and he appeared already near death from wounds and exhaustion, having been made to run all day tied to the tail of a Riff horse. But when this young *giaour* heard them outside teas-

ing the holy men, stripping off their clothes and torturing them a little, as was the custom, before turning them loose, he must have somehow burst his bonds, or perhaps burnt them loose at the fire, for suddenly he was out among them like ten *giaours*, beating down their knives with his two fists, kicking one man double with his knee, seizing two more to crack their heads together like empty coconuts—all the while uttering a long and most terrifying yell which the woman repeated graphically.

“Our hunting call!—the *irrezina*, ’Steban!”

Her husband nodded. “And no Basque within a thousand miles to come.”

In the end, not being ten *giaours* but only one, they finished him, the woman said—attacked the young fighting-man all together with knives and clubs, herself assisting, and tied him, profusely bleeding, probably quite dead by that time, onto a horse’s back, and galloped off; having first turned the infidel men of peace out naked into the *bled*, to show what came of interfering where they were not wanted. For her part, she had been allowed to keep what was in the *giaour’s* pockets.

At this point, Esteban told his wife, Ben Hamed had cried out furiously: “But this was not intended! Allah hear me, in our agreement he was in no way

to be harmed!"—and it was then that he had insisted upon Esteban's return with the two menservants, while he pushed rapidly on alone into his uncle's territory.

"I knew it!" exclaimed Emily, beating her hands together. "Ben Hamed planned everything!—except perhaps the last. Oh, but 'Steban, why did you let him turn you back? They may still have Nacio there half alive, those Riff devils! It isn't like you to give up because of danger!"

She stopped. Her husband was looking at her with something like agony in his usually impassive face. "Danger to you, yes," he said, huskily. "Only for that. You think it was easy? Ben Hamed confessed to me that no foreign woman, particularly one still young and beautiful, was safe here even among his own people. We are in the midst, it seems, of enemies; all are Riff sympathizers, fanatics, taught to hate Christians, even the French, their friends. 'Africa for the Africans' is the watchword. Constant raids continue to occur, even so near Tetuan, within sound of French guns. At home we do not realize. Name of a name, how are a conquered people to be handled who will not remain conquered?" he demanded, helplessly. "Who turn in a moment from humble villagers into savage soldiery,

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from peaceful shepherds into bandits of the most barbarous type? So, my Emilie—I am here.”

She put quick arms around him, understanding with humility that her husband had perhaps sacrificed for her sake his only brother. They made great lovers where they loved, these Urruty. * * *

Later she opened Nacio's notebook, with its sinister brown stains, to see what he might have written there for his *fillette*. The thing proved to be less a diary than a rather versatile record of impressions, visual and aural. One or two pages contained music score, queer little airs noted down from a passing street singer or a desert flute; others held crude but singularly effective line drawings, sketches of things more easily to be caught with pencil than with pen. More frequently there was writing, vivid short word-pictures in prose or verse, mostly in English for Mariflor's better understanding. Of the latter, Emily read one aloud to Esteban, who listened astonished, recalling suddenly his grandmother's cryptic utterance about having nourished genius in the family.

“Caravans from the Hills of Air
Pause in the market place,
Linger awhile to rest them there.
Camels snarl; ghaïtas wail
Out of a tent where dervishes
Posture their mad indecencies,

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Tear live flesh from their limbs, and lie
Calling on Allah, and do not die.
Africa like a muted drum
Beats in the arteries.
From the street of the Ouled Nails
Into the market place
A woman breathing of musk has come,
Breathing a word one may not hear,
Lifts her veil as she passes near
And I see your face."

"*Peste!* but that is poetry, *n'est-ce pas?* and English poetry," said Esteban, respectfully. "Yet hardly fitted for the understanding of a young child!"

"Nacio was not thinking of his *fillette* when he wrote that, but of Rosemary. The worst is over, 'Steban; he's begun turning his Rosemary into verse!" said Emily, with tears in her eyes to realize that this might be all they would have to keep of Nacio—a stumbling verse or two, the faint remembered pipe of a *chirilion* floating down from these other hills of air where he had left his sheep.

A few days later, the boy Yesu came running to Emily and Esteban in some alarm, saying that Riff tribesmen were approaching, had been seen entering the town gate. Emily had felt since Esteban's return as if they were living in a state of siege. More than once she had been startled by the sound of sudden musket-shots in the town below, which proved to

be only powder-play in honor of some native festivity. She could not but observe that Esteban carried a little derringer in his pocket, which was not his habit; and she no longer found amusing the enormous pistol and knife their small protector, Yeshu, displayed so proudly in his belt. Now with one accord they hurried up to the housetop, which takes the place of windows in an Arab home.

Up the winding narrow lane which led to Ben Hamed's house trotted a single line of wild-looking brown-clad horsemen mounted on shaggy mountain ponies, followed by several laden pack-mules. Behind these, in white flowing burnous and rope-bound turban, rose a noticeably more elegant figure, whom they recognized with sharp relief as their host Ben Hamed; and behind him, also in white, with a floating headcloth bound about his hair by a crimson cord, a very lean, tall, bearded man who sat his curvetting black stallion with a certain easy grace which caused Esteban suddenly to let out a surprising yell: "*Heu, heu! Aie-e-e! Urrutia-ah! Heu!*"

The bronzed face, dark as an Arab's, turned up to them with a quick, glad smile of recognition; while Ben Hamed beamed and nodded reassuringly, like a child returning from performing a successful errand.

"*Comment donc!*" remarked Esteban, briskly,

when he had felt his brother all over to be sure that he was quite intact—the reunion between the two brothers was none the less moving to onlookers for its offhand brevity. “Further questions and answers must postpone themselves until we are safe aboard the *Gathid*; you may picture to yourself with what impatience the *etcheonda* awaits our return!”

Nacio shook his head. A new poise had come to the young man, that quiet dignity of one accustomed to command himself, and therefore others. “Unfortunately, we must wait yet awhile the arrival of the Grand Caid, who travels less rapidly than we have done, having women with him.”

Esteban cried out: “Name of a thousand devils!—what more have you to do with the Grand Caid and his women? Surely under the circumstances polite adieux may be dispensed with!”

Nacio looked at him, nervously. “I have given my word, brother.”

“*Bien hecho!* Take courage, my friend!” laughed Ben Hamed, slyly. “Or shall I tell them?—Our Nacio desires to remain, naturally, to complete the ceremony of his marriage.”

“Marriage!” Emily sat weakly down upon the nearest divan, quite undone by this anti-climax. “I might have known!” she murmured, rallying. “I had forgotten—the Lady Maymoon!”

"But naturally. Who else?" murmured Ben Hamed, twirling his mustache in a pleased manner. "It was I, even I, who have arranged all, thereby gaining much credit with my uncle; who has not yet, you comprehend, any immediate male issue, all his sons having been killed off during adolescence. And Lalla Meimouna, his favorite daughter, brought up in the *andurun* of a relative in Algiers whose head wife is an Englishwoman, has proven a little difficult to marry; preferring—like myself—the company of Europeans. Therefore, being under certain tribal obligations to my uncle"—he shrugged deprecatingly—"I undertook with my superior advantages to procure as promising a specimen of *Roumi* as possible for the girl. And who," he rose to affectionate climax, "more promising, more worthy of such opportunity, than my cherished companion-at-arms, our Nacio?"

Esteban turned an abrupt back on his host and said incredulously to his brother, "You think for one moment that our grandmother, our father, will consent to such a marriage?"

"There is no choice, brother; I have given my word," Nacio said again, quietly. "It was, in fact, only on that condition that I was permitted to leave the—the hospitality of Caid Nasir."

Esteban exclaimed: "But the money, the large

sum I put into Ben Hamed's hand for your ransom?"

"Was not for ransom, as Ben Hamed should have explained, brother, but for bride money; the dower which in this country is paid by a prospective bridegroom to the woman's father. Also, a woman of our family was necessary to observe the proper conventions in receiving the bride."

"Do you mean," put in Emily, sharply, "that you were actually captured and carried off into the Riff, and nearly killed into the bargain, simply for the purpose of providing a husband to the Caid's daughter?"

Ben Hamed's head drooped with embarrassment; he made further ingenuous explanations. His arrangements, he said, had slightly miscarried. His first intention had been merely to detain his friend most comfortably at his own house until the girl could be brought in, suitably attended, from her retirement in the hills. "For my cousin has been allowed, you understand, a strange liberty of ideas," he explained, shrugging. "She demanded actually to see before accepting the husband we had chosen for her!" But Nacio's impatience, his determination to venture farther into the interior, even to the exposed outpost established by the Pères Blancs, had upset all calculations. What was to be done, he shrugged,

with a nature so impetuous? "However, my uncle's raiding *harka* had instructions to injure my friend as little as possible when taking him. They have been well punished, I dare say, for their carelessness."

"They have been maimed," said Nacio, quietly.

"You see?" Ben Hamed added, confidentially, to the dismayed silence: "But it was not entirely for purposes of marriage that my uncle decided to persuade your brother to be his guest in the Riff. He had learned of Nacio's late prowess against our countrymen in the French air service."

"Which naturally he resented?" murmured Emily.

"On the contrary, Sitt! My uncle is, despite his uncouth ways, a very progressive man. He has recently purchased—quite privately, you understand—a number of scout and bombing planes, with intention to form an air service of his own. He lacks only such expert instruction in their use as Nacio is well fitted to give."

"You were forced to this?" demanded Esteban of his brother, sharply.

"But certainly not," was the simple reply. "I refused, explaining to *Monsieur le Caid* that it would be treasonable to instruct a possible enemy in arts

of warfare which might one day be turned against ourselves."

"He refused," marvelled Ben Hamed, lyrically, "and yet he lives! He denied the bidding of the Grand Caid of Beni Urriaguel, which few, including myself, have dared to do, and nothing occurs to him!—not even a trifling mutilation, such as a cropping of the ears. What a man!" It was uncertain whether this naïf admiration was directed toward the merciful Caid or toward his hardy friend. "For this we have to thank, no doubt, the maidenly weakness of Lalla Meimouna, who had her look through the harem screen at the husband chosen for her. *Mektub!* it is written."

It seemed indeed to be written. Even resourceful Emily could think of no way out of such an impasse, particularly as Nacio would give them no assistance.

"Why not this marriage as well as another?" he asked rather wearily, when they were alone together. Once a woman had accused him, he said—it was Rosemary—of fear of the *génie d'espèce*; he had no longer such a fear; manhood was needed in the world, men who were sufficiently men should leave their mark upon posterity. This girl was reported healthy, as well educated as women need be, an heiress. "Even gran'mère should find no objection on that score!" Indeed, the value of his

bride gift was already exceeded by gifts the Riff chieftain had pressed upon himself—rich silks, silver-mounted weapons, rare embroideries, enamels—the several pack-mules they had noted were laden with such booty. His bride herself would bring much more. Also, added Nacio, quietly, marriage with a Riff woman would cancel whatever compunction he still felt toward Riff women because of his involuntary treatment of them during warfare.

“I should think,” cried his sister-in-law, impatiently, “that any compunction towards Riffs, male or female, might be canceled by their voluntary treatment of you!” For the young man bore certain scars on his head and body which had turned her faint.

He protested that at the *kasbah* all had been most kind, however. “They even appeared to like me,” he said, modestly; and told something of the rough old Berber hill-castle where the Caid, with his villagers at the foot of it, lived much their own patriarchal life of the Urruty hacienda, engaged in a primitive agriculture, sheep-herding, the breeding of fine horses, but above all in constant war preparation.

“One day,” he said, soberly, “we shall hear more from these Berbers of the Riff! Such fighting-men have not been bred since the early time of our own

people—able to subsist indefinitely on cactus fruit and *labban*, which is the curdled milk of goats; able to trot on their two feet day in, day out, like horses—like your red Indians of America, Emilie; utterly without fear, because they believe that to die in battle for their faith is to go straight to Paradise. A people to respect, if not to love; and above all,” said Nacio, decisively, “not to endeavor to make over into Christians! It is inutile. They have,” he went on in earnest explanation, “not the inner nature of Christians, you comprehend; no feeling of chivalry toward women and other weak—although women have even ruled over them, who were strong like men; no mercy on such as have claim to mercy, dumb animals, the sick, their prisoners.” His face darkened with memory of what had happened occasionally during his stay at the *kasbah* to prisoners less fortunate than himself.

“That is where the brave *Pères Blancs* make terribly their mistake! For followers of Mohammed can no more be made brothers to followers of our gentle Christ than jungle tigers may be made brothers to shepherd dogs. Why should they be?” he spoke with a newly acquired philosophy that would have done credit to Madame Urruty herself. “The world is large enough for many faiths, as for many men! But one thing is most certain,” he

finished, coming down to concrete affairs, "when I have married, I shall not live here among the Ruafa, as Caid Nasir desires. 'Africa for the Africans.' In this there will be no difficulty, since Lalla Meimouna agrees."

"That's fortunate!" murmured his sister-in-law, dryly. "Is the Lady Maymoon, then, one of those Riff women who rule 'because they are strong like men' or otherwise?"

"Otherwise, I think," replied Nacio, quite unsmiling.

"Ah! So she is really beautiful, then?"

"I do not know, not having as yet seen her."

Emily cried out, aghast. "You mean to say you are going to marry a woman you have not even seen?"

"It is the custom here," he replied, indifferently. "But Ben Hamed has seen her often, when they were children, and his taste is more experienced than mine. Also, she has always wished to live in Europe, he says; which is well, because I would not in any case consent to bring Mariflor to Morocco."

"Mariflor!" Emily gave a start of remembrance. "Well! It's time, my dear, you gave a thought to Mariflor."

His surprise was obvious. "But I have never ceased to give thought to Mariflor! It is indeed be-

cause of the *fillette* that I have considered marriage, in order to have a proper establishment of my own. Gran'mère grows a little tired now, my mother has no great love for children, while you and Bette have duties of your own. A growing girl of such an age has especial need of a mother. No?"

"Therefore," muttered Emily, in utter exasperation, "you choose one for her out of the harem, neatly tattooed, no doubt, on chin and brow, after the best Riff fashion!"

Nacio looked rather disturbed; the possibility of tattooing had not occurred to him.

But this fear at least proved groundless. Some days later there arrived at Ben Hamed's house, to the great fluttering of his *andurun*, the first installment of the bridal trousseau, boxes and bales and baskets of it, which marked the commencement of the week-long Moorish wedding ceremonies. It was Emily's duty, representing the matrons of the groom's family, to return this presentation with a ceremonial visit to the bride. Accompanied only by her proud attendant, Yeshu, and her maid Angelique, she went on foot to the house where the Grand Caid had established himself.

Later she described the visit to Esteban. She had been received, seated, by a rather magnificent old potentate in flowing black velvet garments and

a tall white turban, who turned her over majestically to some solemn fat women—whether wives or slaves she could not be sure—who led her into the presence of the bride, seated crosslegged on a bed, entirely concealed by head-and-face veils and a clumsy white *haik*, underneath which were innumerable other coatings of thin chiffon. Her bare feet, startlingly pink as to toes, were further painted with an elaborate semblance of slippers. Once the fat women had departed, however, leaving them alone, Lalla Meimouna had jumped laughing from the bed, shedding her shy demureness and her native garments at once, and stood very much revealed in the latest save one or two of Paris fashions—a frock of the chemise type, sleeveless, cut quite low and very brief; her unveiled hair shorn into the “wind-blown bob” of yesteryear, and her face guiltless, fortunately, of tattoo but smeared with rouge and kohl and lipstick until it was difficult to tell whether she was a woman of the Ouled Naïl or a mere respectable shop-girl out of Seventh Avenue.

“A flapper, ’Steban! The latest thing in Oriental flappers, only a decade or two behind the worst Paris-Chicago sort. And for our Nacio! Instead of smoking a hubble-bubble pipe—which I was quite prepared to do for the honor of the family—we puffed away at amber-scented cigarettes with her

monogram on them, the while she told me such snappy little anecdotes of the sheltered life as * * * Well, really, 'Steban, I'd forgotten how chaste we free Americans are! There's just one hope left for our poor brother. She's eager to see him again, alone, of course; she would be!—insists that I arrange a tryst for them before the final ceremony. And," finished Emily, grimly, "I shall arrange it! Watch me."

Ben Hamed, whom she took into consultation, looked upon the idea with frank alarm. "Anything my friend may wish is my desire," he said, reluctantly. "But for a man to see and talk with a Moorish lady, a respectable woman soon to become his wife—it is a dangerous thing, madame! To be found in the *andurum* of another's house, or on the housetop where his women sit, might well result in death for my friend."

Emily assured him briefly that to marry Lalla Meimouna without having seen and talked with her might result in worse than death for his friend.

"Is it indeed so?" murmured the Moslem, rather mystified. "*Inshallah!*—as Allah wills."

Allah's will did not, however, quite coincide with Emily's, apparently. Perhaps it was the large African stars, hung lantern-like among storks' nested chimney pots, which shed their never-failing

glamour; perhaps it was the grave, tall beauty of the young Basque himself, who stood before her, clean-shaven and civilized again, his head bared in the European manner so that one saw the crisp waves of his hair—whatever the cause, the girl's blatant modernity somewhat subdued itself in the presence of this stranger she was to marry, who had risked his life because of her unmaidenly whim.

Near by, concealed among the chimney pots, waited Ben Hamed, disguised as Nacio's servant, listening all ears. He had not dared to let his friend come alone on so dangerous a venture; moreover, a certain element of curiosity entered in. Moorish ladies of Lalla Meimouna's rank are not permitted, after childhood, to be seen unveiled by any man, even a cousin. The two had come up onto the roofs through an unoccupied house next door, and had waited their chance to approach unseen the sheltered corner where a veiled woman stood alone, according to arrangement.

Lalla Meimouna was the first to speak, rather shyly: "I thought, monsieur, that since I have looked on you, you would perhaps like to look also at me before marriage, as is the foreign custom. No?"

Said Nacio, eyeing her attentively, "I like very much to look at you, mademoiselle." And indeed the girl unveiling before him, despite the expres-

sionless smear of red that was her mouth and the brows painted thick with kohl to meet over her downcast eyes, had real loveliness of feature—the low silvery forehead, the tender moon-shaped face so raptly sung by Oriental poets.

“You find me beautiful?” she asked, still shyly.

He hesitated. “I think I should find you very beautiful if I might see you better.”

“What, you do not see me well? But the stars are bright, Sidi; almost too bright!”

He explained candidly that it was because of the cosmetics that he was unable to see her beauty as clearly as he wished. Another man would probably have been well snubbed for his pains, but Nacio’s gentle gravity made much possible.

“You would like me,” she asked, submissively, “to remove them, perhaps?”

For answer Nacio silently handed her his handkerchief.

After a moment’s obedient rubbing she meekly lifted up her face—meekly, and expectantly. “You like me better so?”

He liked her much better so, Nacio assured her. The conversation languished.

They talked, she asking questions, he answering them, inattentively, their glances meanwhile carrying on a conversation quite separate—Would they

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go sometimes, when they were married, to Paris? But assuredly, whenever Lalla Meimouna wished. She gave a pleased sigh. She would rather, she confessed, go to Paris than to Paradise! (Here a sympathetic movement might have been detected among the nearest chimney-pots.)—Women seemed to be like that, replied Nacio; himself he preferred high, quiet places, where one saw the sky. She made a pretty face at that; she had seen enough of quiet places and of sky! Would she have many women for company in his *andurrun*? Not wives, she understood, that was not the foreign custom; but other sorts? Nacio told her there would be none save his *fillette*, Mariflor.

“So you have already a child! I like children,” nodded Meimouna, contentedly. “But the child’s mother ——?”

“Is dead,” Nacio said, quietly; and because she was to be his wife, told the Moorish girl what he could of Rosemary, whom he had loved but could not marry since she was already wedded.

“Truly, one need not be jealous of the dead,” she shrugged, dismissing Rosemary from consideration. “And this child—what age has she?”

She frowned, surprised, over Nacio’s answer. “Eleven years? But that is almost the marriageable

age! Still, such a one should make company for me if I am lonesome."

"I shall try," said Nacio, warming somewhat to his task, "to keep you with my own company from being lonesome, mademoiselle!"

She laughed provocatively, her small teeth a flash of pearl in her dark face. "Ah, but you are a man. Men are not company for women, Sidi Kebir!" She became serious, looking him up and down, the broad six-foot length of him. "Yes, you are a man," she murmured, the lashes veiling her eyes. Then her kindling gaze suddenly met his, held it. "Was it only for this, only to look at me and talk to me, that you have come, Monsieur the Strong?" she hinted, impatiently.

"Why else, Lalla Meimouna?" Nevertheless, Nacio's knees began to tremble under him.

"*Aie!* Must I even show you, then?" Suddenly she was very close to him, on tiptoe in his arms, the impress of those fierce little white teeth sharp against his lips.

For one who had never before of his own accord kissed a woman, startled Nacio found himself rather adept at it, gave as good as he got, savagely, almost angrily, so that it was less an embrace than a combat between them, Mussulman against Christian—a combat that bade fair to last indefinitely, had not a low

excited "Tchk! Tchk!" sounded from among the chimney pots.

"Someone comes! Your servant gives warning," she breathed reluctantly against his mouth. "*Allah, Kerim*, if it should be my father ——!" She fled noiselessly away.

Nacio, dazed, was never quite sure how he managed descent from the Caid's housetop, despite the sympathetic guidance of Ben Hamed, who kept murmuring rapt congratulations at his ear: "Beard of the Prophet, what a houri! What a bride! What a gift out of Paradise!"

Emily awaited them, fearful yet eager as to results. "Well?" she demanded ruthlessly of the prospective bridegroom.

He looked at her, crimsoned to the ears, and turned away. Despite her expert knowledge of the sex, Emily had forgotten to take into account that highly inflammable tinder of which *genus vir* is composed.

Thereafter she abandoned Nacio to his fate; entering with some curiosity and what spirit she could muster into the elaborate ceremonials of the marriage week, having been trained to adaptability by a rather catholic social experience. She learned to eat with fingers only, out of strange dishes set on tables no higher than her knee, afterwards sitting through

long digestive silences while those about her politely made the expected sounds indicating repletion; she learned to drink innumerable cups of syrupy mint-flavored tea and souplike coffee; she had even the tact to appear on occasion in native dress, a courtesy much appreciated by the ladies of the Caid's family, who in return gave her sympathetic advice as to how her unfortunate lack of poundage might be increased.

Often she was aware of Ben Hamed's eyes upon her, however, inquiring, puzzled, troubled. The enmity between the two had somewhat lapsed of late, perhaps because of his unfailing courteous consideration as a host, perhaps because of his disarmingly sincere devotion to his friend Nacio. Emily Urruty was a woman who could appreciate friendship when she saw it. The subtle young Moslem was gratefully aware of her change of heart toward him, so that the two became at moments almost confidential.

At one such moment he said to her, curiously: "Will you tell me, Madame Esteban, what it is that does not please you in this marriage of my friend, which seems to me so desirable? For I see that it makes you sad; and to have you sad while in my house saddens me also!"

It was a question so hopeless to answer—for there was nothing in the marriage which could please her

—that she parried it with one of her own: “Why does it seem to you desirable, Ben Hamed? Two people of alien race, religion, customs—how could it be a happy marriage?”

His eyebrows lifted in surprise. “Surely a man seeks elsewhere for his happiness than in marriage? Yet—we marry,” he shrugged, resignedly. “Even the free birds marry! You would have preferred, perhaps, that Nacio become a celibate holy-man among his people?”

Emily admitted she was not sufficiently devout for that.

The Moslem gave his eloquent little shrug. “*Tanjib!* Instead, we find for him a bride lovely as a houri—and of my family! It makes me very happy, Madame Esteban, that my friend is to become of my own family. Besides”—his voice lowered significantly—“such a marriage will assure protection for his own people, who thus become our people, when the Jihad occurs. You understand?”

“The Jihad?” she repeated, uncomprehendingly.

“But yes, madame! Surely you will have heard? The promised uprising of Islam against Christendom,” he whispered, after a careful look about him. “You did not know of this? But where are your eyes, you of Europe, that you cannot see what is about you here?”

Emily laughed a little; aware, nevertheless, of a slight shiver along her spine. "A few small uprisings on the part of pugnacious Riffs and rapacious Arabs don't seem to trouble Europe unduly, Ben Hamed!" She was reminded consolingly, and reminded him, of another well-prepared Jihad whose watchword was "*Der Tag*"—a Jihad which had proven something of a boomerang.

The young Spahi nodded, a queer gleam for a moment in his eyes. "Germany," he said, "was but a nation, a single people. Islam is both a religion and a race—a race? What do I say? It is a hundred races! Do you know, madame, that one-sixth of the world's population are followers of Mohammed?"

Emily had not known it, and was for a moment silenced. Then she said, thoughtfully: "Yet, all these Mohammedans seem to have very little to say in the world's government—even in their own! Why is that, Ben Hamed?"

The shot went home. He muttered, in defense: "It is because we have lacked leaders, order, agreement among ourselves. But we are learning!" The fanatic look flashed again in his eyes. "We learn now to take leaders for ourselves where we find them; if necessary, to create leaders. We are beginning to train generals as we have hitherto trained our fighting-men. For when the Jihad begins, it will com-

mence here, in the Maghreb itself, even among us Berbers of the Riff!"

Emily looked at him in wonder, amazed at his change from the lisping, effete gallicized young "man of cities" she had known hitherto. Sudden enlightenment came to her. "And that," she exclaimed, "is what you really want of our Nacio, you and that robber-baron uncle of yours! Oh, but don't you see the utter folly of it? He'd never consent—no European would, certainly no Basque!—to take any part in such an unthinkable uprising!"

"Why not, madame? Other men have fought for us, even as one of us—the great Englishman, L'Auruns, for one."

"Who? Oh, Lawrence of Arabia, yes. But against other Moslems, Ben Hamed!—never against Europe, Christendom, his own people."

"Basques were," said the Mussulman, significantly, "before Christendom, before Europe. They belong, like ourselves, to the ancient race of Tehenon, men of the true West, the Maghreb, the sunset. When the world goes to its greatest of all wars, why should they not fight beside us, their brothers, rather than against us? *Mektub!* We shall see. And meanwhile," he added, more lightly, in a tone of reassurance, "you of Nacio's family at least need feel no alarm, since you are about to be-

come members also of our family, the family of Nasir!—Now do you understand why I have wished to marry the friend I love to my uncle's daughter?"

Emily remarked briefly that in any case she would feel no particular alarm, since a people who must look to other nations for their leaders seemed to her to offer small menace to the world's future.

"*Tanjib*, as you will!" he said, rather crestfallen. "Still, it is well to look, as the saying goes, on all three sides of a wall. No?—And it is not," he added, with a naïve return to his former confidential intimacy, "as if some more advantageous family marriage had been already arranged elsewhere?"

That gave Emily her idea, a last forlorn hope. She had sensed in the Moslem an odd vein of unexpected manly sentiment.

"Ah," she admitted, with a dramatic sigh that was none the less sincere, "now you have touched the inner core of the matter, Ben Hamed! This marriage with your cousin will bring heart's grief to another, a little maid still too young to dream of marriage, yet who loves Nacio even as you love him—more than either knows."

The other struck his fist into the palm of his hand. "The orphan one! The amber-eyed little golden lamp who was refused to me! But that is his foster

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child, Sitt? Surely a man can never be permitted to marry with his foster daughter?"

She explained that European customs were less rigid in that respect than Moslem ones. "And the child isn't really Nacio's foster daughter; he has never legally adopted her."

The Moor was obviously mollified by this explanation of a refusal which had somewhat offended his pride. "What pity, what pity that Christians may take only one wife! Had I but known, I might well have contented myself to marry with my cousin—who is more alluring than one remembered. This knowledge comes too late," he mused.

Emily caught at the straw. "Too late? Surely not! You cannot fancy," she exclaimed, rising to quite Oriental heights of fervor, "that Nacio is inferior to yourself in capacity for friendship? Never! I am sure that he would consent willingly, even gladly, to relinquish a bride, no matter how alluring, desired by such a friend as you!" We'll arranged that in person, was her grim inward promise.

But Ben Hamed replied with great simplicity "You have not yet seen them together, Sitt—a mating of twin flames. No, no! Were Nacio to offer my uncle Nasir el Nahabi such an affront as to decline marriage with his daughter, after paying bride money, after secretly seeing and talking with the

girl—and more, Sitt,” he added, delicately—“Allah forbid! Before he was halfway to the yacht in Ceuta harbor, he would cease to exist!”

Emily saw that she had lost again. “Nothing for it, then, but to say—what is that fatalistic word of yours? *Mektub!* It is written.”

And Ben Hamed murmured absently the customary response, “*Inshallah!* It is the will of God.”

From their usual coign of vantage, the housetop, Emily and Esteban and Nacio himself, all in full bridal array, watched silently the approach of the procession bringing Nacio’s bride on her final journey from her father’s hands into those of her future husband; which would complete the marriage ceremonies until such time as they could appear before a Christian priest.

Their host was not with them, having gone, a resplendent figure in pale-blue silk embroideries under a flowing scarlet cloak, to ride with other gentlemen of the family in the bride’s train. It was quite an impressive procession, which they were able to observe again and again as it wound slowly in and out of the narrow twisting lanes below. First came musicians playing excruciating native instruments, whose din was somewhat mitigated by the excited shouts of the populace, the constant explosion of rifles, the

shrill *jahrits*, or joy cries, of the women assembled to watch on every housetop. Behind these rode, in solitary grandeur, the Grand Caid Nasir el Nahibi, his black velvet robe, under a sheer white burnous, hung with jeweled chains and gauds, soft yellow riding-boots pulled well up over his thighs, his tall turban wound round and round with the green cord of one who has made pilgrimage to Mecca—a hawk-nosed, predatory old ruffian whose jutting features strongly reminded Emily of familiar Basque types in her own neighborhood. Behind him rode a *harka* of fighting-men, two and two; their usual brown desert garb replaced for the occasion, by cloaks and headcloths vividly colored as tulips. Then came children throwing flower petals and piping a shrill marriage chant; then veiled woman attendants, shrouded in their shapeless white *haiks*; then—Emily's field-glasses were trained on it for careful observation—the bridal litter, swung between slow-pacing mules; a queer little hive-shaped sedan decorated gayly as a wedding cake with ruffles of lace and long strings of pearl beads and garlands of strung jasmine flowers, within which crouched invisible that product of the times, that ultra-modern flower of the Maghreb, the Lady Maymoon, swathed to the ankles in layer upon layer of white wrappings in order that no eye

might guess her charms until she emerged upon her bridegroom, bright as a moth from its cocoon. Behind her rode various resplendent gentlemen of the family, shouting at intervals and firing off joy shots.

"They want you to know that they are coming, little brother," remarked Emily to Nacio, who made no answer. Glancing at him sidewise, she noted that the bridegroom looked less eager than might have been expected.

The powder-play was deafening. Emily no longer jumped with alarm at this favorite Moorish form of celebration, wherein horsemen, or even men on foot, charging straight at one another, fire their muskets into the air just as they veer aside; it was from the Moors, she decided in passing, that Spaniards inherit their love of loud and sudden noise. But never before had she heard such powder-play as this, so continuous and violent, and mingled with such ferocious shouting. As the procession approached the Soko, or market place, a new element seemed to have entered in; above the yells and shots sounded one scream like the shriek of a horse in mortal agony. Esteban leaned over the parapet with a sudden oath; and at the same moment her faithful body-guard, Yeshu, seized Emily by the skirts,



BURNOUSES ALL STRUGGLING TOGETHER
AROUND THE BRIDAL LITTER

crying, "Get back, Sitt, back! That is no play, it is a raid!—It is enemy tribesmen! Look! Look!" His voice rose to a childish howl of rage. "Allah forbid! They are trying to steal away our bride!"

She saw Nacio wheel about, hesitate just a moment, then jerk the silver-mounted pistol out of his sash and run toward the stairs, Esteban close at heel. She remembered afterwards that second of hesitation, that look as of sudden reprieve, almost of hope.

Yeshu gave up trying to pull her back from the parapet. Together they leaned far over, staring intently at the wild confusion below. Brown burnouses, white ones, burnouses of vivid colours, all struggling together around the bridal litter; shrieks, furious curses, more shots; figures diving into houses, scrambling up walls; the sound of unshod hoofs galloping into the distance—and then, as if some erasing magic had passed over the scene, dead silence; an empty Soko, where nothing moved at all except one mule, which tried now and again to rise from its haunches and could not; except one figure in a blood-stained pink burnous crawling slowly, slowly over other still figures along the shadow of a wall. Into this silence emerged, running shoulder to shoulder, the two Basque men, pistol in hand. They reached the overturned bridal litter. Here Emily dropped her field-glasses and uttered aloud a queer,

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abrupt exhortation—"Now then, Allah!" She looked again. The bridal litter was empty.

Ben Hamed, the courteous, broke all laws of hospitality by suggesting that his guests leave as soon as possible for Ceuta, whither he accompanied them, profuse with regrets for this unavoidable disaster to their plans. "There is, as you observe, a temporary disaffection among the neighboring tribesmen hereabouts; and when there is such disaffection"—he shrugged apologetically—"strangers are better elsewhere."

His parting with Nacio was affecting. "Not so, true brother of my heart," he sighed, his over-expressive Arab eyes mournful as a deserted hound's, "had I hoped to see you leave my country, but as our kinsman by marriage, often to return."

"I shall return, even if I am not your kinsman by marriage," promised Nacio, simply. "As for this disaster—do not grieve for it too greatly, Hamed, my friend. To speak truth, I think I am not quite yet prepared for the obligations of matrimony. *Alors!* There are so many other interests in the world than women!"

The Moslem agreed, doubtfully, that there were indeed very many. He returned the bride money on behalf of his uncle the Grand Caid; who, he said,

was too deeply mortified by so unprecedented a failure to complete his bargain to apologize in person.

"And I suppose," suggested Emily, eyeing him rather fixedly, "that your uncle the Grand Caid is also deeply concerned as to the fate of his unfortunate daughter?"

It so happened that her excellent field-glasses had picked out in the very thick of battle the unmistakable figure of their host, that man of civilization, yelling and shooting fiercely as the best—but on the wrong side; his azure wedding garments somewhat inadequately concealed by one of the rough brown desert cloaks of the raiding party. Later her glasses had followed this same figure disappearing rapidly among the rabbit-warren streets, with something flung across his saddle-bow which looked like an enormous white cocoon.

The Moslem mildly returned her gaze. But no, he reassured her, his uncle was not too deeply concerned, having no doubt already satisfied himself as to the whereabouts of his stolen daughter. "We are, after all, of the one blood, Nasir el Nahabi and myself!" he mentioned, irrelevantly.

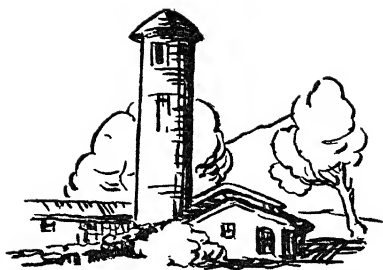
On that Emily abandoned subterfuge, and frankly held out her hand. "It was the act of a true friend, Ben Hamed, a sacrifice that involved no little risk!"

This, however, neither family pride nor native

Berber honesty could quite brook. "Risk, perhaps"—he shrugged. "But sacrifice?" He smiled at her meditatively out of the corner of his eyes. "You have seen my cousin, Sitt! *Mezzian*, *mezzian bessaf*. Paradise itself will not afford me such another. There is also a certain congeniality of taste, a certain warmth of nature which might well have wasted itself among cooler-hearted Europeans. 'Africa for the Africans.' No?" The significant phrase brought again into his eyes the odd little fanatic gleam she had noted there before. "If in the end marriage proves disappointing"—he continued, negligently—"it is with us quite simple to end; a man has but to say three times in the presence of proper witnesses, 'I divorce thee,' and it is done. Therefore," he urged her courteously, "pray do not burden yourself, *chère madame*, with any sense of obligation. We part friends—for the time being. Yes? *Mektub!*"

To which Emily returned a polite and quite devout, "*Inshallah!*"

LEGENDE





IV

LEGENDE

WHEN Nacio Urruty began to find himself, as the saying goes, he set up bachelor quarters under the wing of the family hacienda, encouraged thereto by his wise young sister Bette, who knew from double experience the requirement of a certain type of temperament for solitude.

“Alors, if a painter like my Jaun Smeet requires an entire empty house in which to conceive his little pictures, if a savant like my Monsieur Tubal cannot submerge his intellect in study of the past except under a half-fallen roof with bats to it—how much

more needful," suggested Bette, always practical, "is a secluded situation for one who requires to march about uttering fine language at himself without alarming others—*Hein?*"

"*Tu as raison, petite,*" admitted their grandmother, and at once made over to her youngest grandson an ancient fortified mill-house—not quite a ruin, since ruins were not encouraged to exist on Urruty property, but used for the past century or so only for the storing of farm produce; no little proud in secret, matter-of-fact old husbandwoman though she was, of the very different type of Urruty produce which presently began to issue therefrom.

Always a lover, from his childhood at Anna-Damasa's knee, of fairy-lore and folk-lore, of that strange mixture of giants, dragons, and witches, of primitive gods and devil-beasts, of Saracens, crusaders, troubadours, and what not, which weaves the colorful tapestry of Pyrenean *légende*, Nacio was in great demand at shepherds' meets and other festal occasions in the valley as a *koplaría*, an improviser of tales told or sung in rhyming couplets—that curious survival, quite usual in the Pays Basque, of old jongleur custom, which finds its climax in the Jeux Floreaux held yearly at Toulouse, where a golden rose is still offered as prize in memory of

their patron-poetess, Clémence Isaure. There are humbler competitions of the sort held at village festivals also, in which two or three improvisators vie with one another on a chosen subject; the winner being he whose rhymes come the most quickly and appositely. At this pastime, as typically Basque as the game of pelota, Nacio the shy, the slow-spoken, had long been champion of all valleys thereabout, defeating even on occasion that skilled man of letters, Tubal Etcheverray, Comte des Luynes. Nacio's improvisations, indeed, were already current in that country of few books and many traditions, having passed from mouth to mouth throughout the Pays Basque; so that he often recognized his impromptu *koplas* being sung or spoken far away from his own village.

Carlyle has pointed attention to the fact that "only in a man's work is he enabled to discern the true lineaments of his features." Quite gradually it was borne in upon the young man, by way of humble and needed comfort, that nature had not intended to create in him either priest, soldier, or sailor, whether of the high seas or the higher seas, but merely an entertainer, a minstrel of sorts, what his grandmother would probably term "a mountebank"—one of those dedicate beings whose sole purpose is, through the medium of what art they have, to

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amuse a workaday old world that can no longer amuse itself, to help it forget what needs forgetting, or haply to remember what is well remembered. Nacio was, in other words, by way of being a poet; and when he came to realize it he found that others had realized it long since.

The mill-house, legitimate descendant of his shepherd's hut in the high pastures, had been built as a sort of fortified defense-tower against the warlike needs of an earlier day; comprising three large square rooms superimposed one above another, the topmost reached by an outer stairladder which could be conveniently pulled up at will. This became Nacio's workroom, a Spartan apartment enlivened only by his collection of birds' eggs and the stuffed corpses of various animals he had known and loved—Nacio being of a singularly faithful nature, and addicted in his earlier youth to the macabre pleasures of taxidermy. The room below was partitioned off, for purposes of hospitality, into a sort of dormitory, from whose windows, as Nacio was proud of pointing out to his guests, one might plunge directly into the deep millpond outside as into a superlative swimming bath. The ground-floor room, beside the mill-dam with its idle rusted wheel, was Nacio's official *atelier*, a cavelike yet singularly pleasant apartment whose slits of windows in the thick walls had been

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enlarged to make deep window seats, the stone floor carpeted with trophies of the hunt, the walls covered with books in three languages, and a rather rare collection of ancient Basque and African musical instruments, among them a pictorial little pianoforte once the property of the ladies Olhagarray. On the cavernous hearth of this *atelier* Nacio prepared for his guests on occasion certain masculine and hearty viands whose succulent reputation went far abroad—the Ur-ruty being a family of notable cooks, even in that land of notable cooking.

Altogether, the bachelor hospitalities of the mill-house began to vie with those of the *etcheonda* itself. Nacio had a flair for making devoted friends in odd places, most of whom found their way soon or late to his latch-string—item, his Moorish brother-at-arms, Nasir ben Hamed, grown a trifle sleek and pasha-like with matrimony; item, a certain Countess Kitty, a plain-spoken sporting old Irishwoman whose horses he sometimes hunted with the English pack at Pau, and who openly declared her intention to marry Nacio and be a mother to him if ever her good Earl died off; item, that very influential cleric, the Prince-Bishop of Urgel, whose See happened to include the domain of Andorra, and who combined with his apostolic taste for fishing a very kindly interest in the child Mariflor, once a

subject of his realm. As Nacio's reputation grew, an even more catholic assortment of guests began to come and go at the mill-house, greatly to the content of Madame Urruty.

"*En effet*, now that all the world comes to us, we shall have less need to go out into the world!" she remarked, complacently.

Over these mill-house activities young Mariflor presided very prettily and gracefully; finding it—as did Nacio himself, for that matter—a rather tiresome and arbitrary ruling that she was not allowed to become one of the mill-house residents. On this point the matriarch remained adamant; it was more convenable, she said, briefly, that one of such tender years remain well within reach of a maternal eye.

"But, darling gran'mère, there couldn't possibly be a more maternal eye than Nacio's!" protested the girl—quite submissively, however; she had always very sweet and docile ways. "He takes the greatest care of me—almost too much care, gran'mère!—always afraid I'll tire myself, or snarl my hair, or burn my fingers, or take cold in my throat. You'd suppose I was made out of spun glass!"—and indeed there was something exquisitely fragile about this new Mariflor, at an age which is the most poignant of all a woman's ages, when dreams begin to stir in the soft eyes, and unknown voices whisper,

and "life is all a wonder and a wild desire." She had grown latterly rather long of limb, with slender intimations of a figure yet to come; and while the golden fleece of hair Nacio loved still hung shining about her shoulders, she no longer ran and romped with the old abandon, but conducted herself quite demurely, in the manner nuns term "recollected." Esteban's children, notably young Wally, who had hitherto regarded himself as her contemporary if not her superior, were made suddenly aware with some resentment of the insurmountable difference in their ages—Wally being perhaps two years Mariflor's junior; whereas she devoted herself more and more assiduously to Bette's twins, and to the smaller baby who had recently crowded them out of the De Maytie cradle.

While she was not at all domestic in the *pot-au-feu* manner of Bette—indeed, in domestic affairs she showed a certain confiding helplessness which Nacio delighted to foster—she had nevertheless certain gifts of her own. No small part of the charm of the mill-house for its many guests was due to the appealing charm of the young girl Mariflor.

Foiled of her ambition to become one of its permanent inmates, she managed, nevertheless, to spend the larger portion of her waking day there, since Nacio had taken upon himself the more serious part

of his *fillette's* education—aided by one of those anomalous meek females of uncertain years, generically known as “Mademoiselle,” without whom no European family is complete: specialists in accomplishments, deportment, French and Italian accent, embroidery stitches, “scales,” sensibilities, and other necessities of *jeunes filles bien élevées*. Nacio was determined to do his full duty by Rosemary's legacy, having declined firmly all suggestions that his Maryflower be sent away, like other *fillettes* of the family, to the good ladies of the Sacred Heart at Toulouse, or to the Convent of the Recollects at St. Jean. The mother, he explained, was non-Catholic; had even an unfortunate prejudice against the teachings of *religieuses*.

“All the more reason,” observed his grandmother, “that such heretic ignorance be corrected in the child!”

But Nacio replied, with a new quiet air of decision derived from his late experiences in the world: “Not so, gran'mère. There is for every soul born into life some form of religious belief, no doubt, which it must find for itself in order to go on living. But to *le bon Dieu*”—he shrugged—“one, I dare say, does as well as another!”—a heresy which his tolerant old ancestor, true daughter of the Church

though she was, found herself unable to combat with any conviction.

So very peacefully year followed year, and Mariflor outgrew doll-babies in favor of live ones; and all of a sudden Nacio became famous. With this modest *réclame* Mariflor herself had unwittingly much to do. It came about through one of the entertainments Nacio arranged on occasion for the neighborhood children, it having occurred to his paternal need that the traditional dramatic pastorales with which Basques celebrate their many fêtes, descendants of the ancient mystery-plays and *chansons de geste*, were a trifle archaic, not to say improper, for immature minds. One entertainment in particular, a somewhat anachronistic combination of the old favorite, "Charlemagne and the Twelve Peers," with certain denatured episodes out of the later Crusades, was presented on the occasion of Madame Urruty's eighty-first saint's day; with such effect that a return performance was commanded, the Comte des Luynes offering for this event the huge restored *salle des gardes* of L'Ey Kahatcia, with its minstrel gallery for a stage, wherein half the village might seat itself at a time, while the other half leaned eagerly in at the windows. Certain specially invited guests were present also; notably the great Spanish

painter Zubaios, with friends, from across the mountain.

Nacio had added to his dramatic versification of the old *pastorale* certain local features which turned it into what Spaniards call a *zarzuela*, the true ancestor of *opéra bouffe*. Ancient native music appeared, with ancient dances—the *saut Basque*, the *espada dantza*, the *mutchikoak* or goat dance—in order that the Urruty young in particular might exhibit the extreme nimbleness of their feet. There was a jousting tourney in which small Leocadie, as Childe Roland, on her piebald pony Veillantif (named naturally for Roland's charger), defeated her brother Wally on his Arab *jaca*, representing the hated Saracen; an encounter so spirited that the combatants had to be forcibly separated by the audience, the unhorsed Saracen protesting bitterly: "She jousted me right in the middle, I tell you!—'twasn't fair, even for a girl!"

Not only each of the Urruty children, but every child in the neighborhood, had its rôle in this stirring dramatic event; among all of whom, however, conspicuous as is always a touch of genius amid mediocrity, stood out the vivid personality of the young girl Mariflor. Whether she spoke, or moved, or merely stood, at the slightest unconscious gesture or bend of the graceful head, attention centered itself

inevitably upon her. And when, in the singing of the beautiful old Basque choruses, which never find their way into print but are handed jealously down from one generation to another, one young voice rose clear and true above the rest, higher, higher, with the soaring confidence of a bird in flight, several of those present understood suddenly the child's arresting quality. That husky, throaty, soft young voice, lifted in song, acquired a strangely vibrant timbre which stirred the senses.

"Where did your little maid here learn to sing like this?" curiously inquired Zubäios, lifting Mariflor's chin in order to search at his better convenience the mobile, sensitive face.

Nacio replied brusquely, having a long-standing distaste for the painter's vicinity, "From an American phonograph, monsieur."

Nor was Rosemary's phonograph the only souvenir left of Mariflor's little-girlhood. There were also inevitably the pig Pinky and the Briard sheep-dog Andorre, both of whom held positions of trust about the mill-house establishment; and a certain corner of Nacio's workroom was devoted to Mariflor's still-cherished "b'longings," brought over from the little villa in Andorra: some books on archæology with the fly-leaves removed; certain silver tea-things with the monogram R.W. on them,

together with a few framed photographs of people whose names she had long forgotten, if indeed she had ever known them. Nacio, when they were alone together, often made a point of speaking to her about her parents, gently and gravely, about her father's great love for her mother, and her mother's unfailing tenderness with him; while the young girl listened, asking never a question. It seemed to him rather strange that she asked no questions. Once, hesitantly, he asked a question himself: "Do you never think, my Mary-flower, about the land where you were born? Or wonder whether you may have any family left there?"

She answered very low, with a touch of pride that surprised him: "If I had any family, I think they should have come to look for me before this, shouldn't they, Nacio?—But America—Oh, yes, I think about America all the time!—trying to imagine what it is like, trying to dream about it—at night, you know, after I say my prayers, before I go to sleep; when I ought to be thinking about Heaven, I s'pose. But instead, I try to make myself be in America. Because—they just might be there, don't you think?"

"'They'? Who, *petite*? Your parents?" he asked, rather startled.

"Yes—their souls, you know. I expect perhaps

they'd rather be there than in Heaven," she answered, simply.

Deeply moved, he smoothed her hair without speaking. It was his first realization of how much very young children may see, or sense, of the silent adult tragedies enacting around them.

"Would you like," he asked, presently, "to go back to America yourself, one day?"

He felt her tremble, where she perched on the arm of his chair—in this way, Mariflor reading over his shoulder, they had accomplished the greater part of her education. "Not without you!" she said, quickly, in a frightened little voice. "Oh, Nacio, don't ever make me go away from you!"

"*Sois tranquille*, my Mary-flower. You shall never go away from us unless you wish. No, no," he promised gently. "When you are ready to visit America, we shall go together, eh, you and I?"

She turned to him then—for Nacio was not one who made his promises lightly—with a smile of such dewy radiance that he kissed her on it, though demonstration plays, as a rule, small part in Basque affections. It was rather hard, however, not to kiss Mariflor; the Urruty as a family—Pedro, Esteban, Bette, even, the brusque old matriarch herself—made rather a point of caressing the child whenever she came near. To their sturdier substance she seemed

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like some fragile, transplanted hothouse flower which needed a very special atmosphere of tenderness and warmth in which to thrive, or to survive. * * *

It was the *zarzuela* that finally determined Nacio's career. Among Etcheverray's invited audience happened, not by chance, to be a guest of the painter Zubäios, who was also a well-known Parisian impresario. Some weeks later came a formal offer from this gentleman for Nacio's "Pastorale Basque" complete, words, music, dancing and all, to be arranged in connection with one of the shorter classics for the opening of the season's opera.

This marked the occasion of a demonstration such as Paris, which lends itself sympathetically to such demonstrations, had rarely witnessed. The entire Pays Basque, in representation, converged upon the capital to do honor to so unique a family excursion into the realms of art. Don Baltasar Jauregui, arriving from Guipuzcoa with his seven sons and all the various ramifications of their various families, alone made rather a complete occupation of the boxes; and when, in response to vociferous demands, the young Basque aviator-poet appeared in person before the audience, much rumpled as to hair, looking singularly boyish and frightened despite the decoration for extreme valor at his buttonhole, his granduncle could no longer contain his mounting

pride of race, and leaped to his feet with such a hoarse old shouting of the *irrezina*, joined in by all Basques present, that gendarmes had to be called in to quell the ensuing panic below.

Afterwards, in his Paris studio, John de Maytie and Bette his wife entertained, at one groaning board, some sixty-odd Vascons from either side of the Pyrenees, all related to one another by blood or marriage, presided over by Madame Urruty, unnaturally calm and unmoved in her black Sunday silk and crisp white bonnet-basque, the heavy gold chain and brooch of peasant matronhood displayed on her bosom, but with emeralds at her ears and throat which a queen might envy. Pedro was there, wearing his colonel's uniform of France with its empty sleeve pinned across the chest; also Madame Fancine, who had seized the occasion to appear in resplendent evening dress as much like Emily's as possible, but found herself so embarrassingly conscious of her nakedness as to feel some relief when, after one comprehensive glance, Madame Urruty removed her own black Cashmere shawl to drape it hastily over her daughter-in-law's person. And deep were the toasts they pledged one to another, and broad and vigorous the family jests bandied across the board, with a candor which should have brought

blushes to the Anglo-Saxon cheek of Emily, but somehow did not.

Only Nacio himself, in the brief speech forced upon him, expressed dissatisfaction with the evening's triumph. His *zarzuela*, he explained, was meant for children to play not raddled old *coryphées* of the opera. As for the music, it was harmonized and elaborated out of all recognition; their little Mary-flower might have shown them better how true Basque ballads should be sung!—at which remark Esteban promptly swung the young girl up on the table to show them.

She stood looking down rather timidly at all these clear-eyed, strong-featured, kindly strangers, her gaze as always seeking out Nacio. "Must I?" she faltered. "Without any accompaniment? I—I don't believe I could!"

"*Sois tranquille, fillette*. You shall not sing alone," he reassured her. "Since I have not my *chirilion*, I will whistle with you."

So, to the wandering accompaniment of his flute-like whistle, the child stood where she was and obediently sang for them, in the clear soaring voice that was so poignantly unchildish.

"The valley of Andoce, ah, the long valley!

Three times has it broken my heart ——"

she sang; then "The Captive Bird," then the "Errege Jan," that lament of a far wanderer—until there was not a dry eye at table, and Uncle Baltasar sniffed openly as he lifted her down to kiss her cheek, followed by every male relative within kissing reach. Thus, far more surely than by any legal process, was Nacio's *fillette* adopted permanently into the full Urruty-Jauregui connection; and Nacio was far more pleased by her small triumph than by the Paris success of his *zarzuela*.

There is nothing, however, which so accelerates creative impulse as the sight of one's secret imaginations functioning, live entities, in the flesh, or even on the printed page. The year which followed saw the appearance, published simultaneously in French, Spanish, and English, of two slim volumes over the name of Ignacio Urruty. One, called *Soko*, was a collection of vivid sketches, in verse, prose, and song, out of an African market place. The other, in the extreme of contrasts, was that stark heroic drama, *L'Atlantide*, whose sheer beauty of phrase, set against its unique prehistoric background, has secured Ignacio Urruty's fame in two continents, thanks partly to the artistic perception of that most intelligent of *divas*, Madame Lili Varily.

Almost immediately upon book publication came a request from the celebrated young Danish com-

poser, Sören Grön, asking permission to set the *Atlantide* to operatic score, since La Lys herself, as the *diva* is familiarly known to Europe, had expressed a desire to create its title rôle.

Ensued a season of alarums and excursions such as the Urruty village had not known since the days when their own one *artiste* of the stage, Madame Pilar de Maytie, had occasionally shed upon it the light of her rather scandalous presence. The first arrival was Sören Grön himself, a pink-skinned, white-lashed, passionate little specimen of viking, who appeared before Madame Pantchika's *fonda* mounted on a truck and personally conducting his composing-piano—an instrument of such magnitude that the modest inn offered no place for it. The plump Dane tore his hair in several languages. "Gods of Valhalla!—sits here the finest piano-forte in the worldt exposing itself to the elements, and noboddy doos nossing!"—until the Comte des Luynes, passing on his bicycle, came pleasantly to the rescue and escorted the enraged viking, piano and all, to L'Ey Kahatcia and the soothing motherly hospitalities of Bette. Here the impressionable composer fell promptly in love with Bette, to her shocked dismay, and had tactfully to be translated, piano and all, to Nacio's mill-house, where he proceeded to fall in love with Mariflor instead. This proved rather help-

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ful than otherwise, since the girl was too immature to matter, and served him as necessary feminine inspiration. The Dane, enamored of the child's bright hair and sun-warm skin and the clear untroubled amber of her eyes, was always warbling at her ear what he conceived to be an appropriate English love-ditty:

“Loozy iss a golden gurrll,
And a man, a man should voo her!”

to which the golden girl would respond, laughing: “He just needn’t then, dear Sören—because no man is ever going to ‘voo’ me away from Nacio!” And the other would sigh windily, casting looks of envious congratulation at his unconscious host.

But there was nothing ludicrous about Sören Grön in action; those soft fat white hands of his had a magic which at need transformed his piano into a full symphonic orchestra. Also the composer was a thoroughgoing artist of that peculiar dynamic temperament which turns to its purpose everything within reach; he had the need to see and feel his musical creations, not merely to hear them. John de Maytie soon found himself pressed into yeoman’s service, designing prehistoric backgrounds; the savant Etcheverray laid aside his own work in order to search his library for archaic costuming sugges-

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tions; Nacio wrote and rewrote, fitting his heroic verse to libretto requirements. Some excellent voices were discovered in the village to try out choral effects. The mill-house transformed itself into a singing-tower of sorts, from which issued presently such music as that neighborhood was rarely privileged to hear.

The opera began to take visible shape and form. Nacio's *chirilion*, Esteban's *basauflûte*, the *cornemuse*, that ancient Basque bagpipe upon which the blacksmith Olhaiby celebrated special occasions—all found recognizable part in this strange, primitive modern music which might quite as well have been the primitive ancient music of a forgotten race. Whole scenes were acted out in the minstrel gallery of L'Ey Kahatcia. As Emily Urruty wrote to her stepmother at Biarritz: "You really ought to run up here now, Suzanne, and see what's happening to our primeval wilderness! We're rapidly becoming the Provincetown of the ancient world."

It was on Mariflor that Grön relied, however, for his most valued assistance. The girl, realizing that she was understudying for the moment one of the great dramatic sopranos of the times, flung herself into the high tragedy of the *Atlantide* with an intuitive comprehension amazing enough in one so young. It was upon the surprisingly wide range of

her untaught voice that the Dane tried out arias and recitatives, with such effect that frequently he wept in sheer self-gratulation. "Was effer," he would sob, striking himself ingenuously upon the brow, "such another child of chenius as this Sören Grön?" And Mariflor, seeing him so pleased, would sing and sing, repeating the strange haunting song-motifs over and over again for him until her slender figure drooped and the free-soaring voice became faint and husky with weariness.

"*Skaal! skaal!*" he would salute her then, remorsefully, lifting to her the mug of stout Basque beer he kept always within reach when composing; making her sip a little from it. "Vat a timbre, vat style, vat perfection of phrase, my anchel! Closing the eye, von sinks almost it is La Lys herself—a newer, fresher Lili, *hein?*—vith less of eggspérience to remember, and more to anticipate. Vidout training—*Sku*, it is no less than a meeracle!"

Nacio might perhaps have explained the miracle. Among Rosemary's phonograph records happened to be several which had been made by Madame Varily herself, in days when she was indeed a newer, fresher Lili—not bad training for an imitative child, gifted with natural voice and instinctive, inherited musicianship.

Nor was it only her voice that Grön found in-

valuable. The girl had an inborn sense of theater, did inevitably the thing required of her before she was told; so that the composer was literally building his rôle around her as a clever costumer designs upon a living model.

Emily Urruty looked on at all this rather thoughtfully. "Do you not think, Herre Grön," she asked him once, "that our young Mariflor shows an unusual amount of talent?"

"Talent? *Guderne ved, har hun talent?* Madame, she is *all* talent! It is a gift vich comes not vith von cheneration. See, I tell you somesing," he muttered confidentially. "Von day, lives she but long enough, zis liddle golden gurr! sings me my greatest rôles—yes, and rôles greater zan mine—till the name of Varily makes nossing by comparison, nossing! For vilst La Lys is indubitably *artiste*—yes, yes! also incomparably a voman, *hein?* vith vat a chenerous abandon of the passions!—she lacks only"—here he approached his lips appreciatively to Emily's very pretty ear to whisper heresy—"she lacks only chenius! She is not musician born—like mineself, like our liddle golden gurr!. No! Not!"

Nevertheless, he had no scruples against using for his own purposes the gift he so appreciated, even to the point of abusing it. At all hours of the day Mariflor had to be at Grön's beck and call. Nor did

Nacio interfere, careful as he was always of his *fillette*; knowing that it was a wonder-time for a girl of her inheritance to remember always.

And then, as the score neared final completion, came even more memorable experience for Mariflor. Hermose the umbrella-mender, official gossip to the neighborhood, was its harbinger, arriving quite breathless on his panting donkey to warn the hacienda of an impending visitation. And what a visitation!—an automobile all white and beautiful as a child's hearse, described Hermose unctuously, even to its internal fittings of mother-of-pearl mirrors and ivory scent bottles, of white-linen-covered seats that were in truth chaises-longues; with white flowers in the little vases, a chauffeur liveried in white linen, another manservant beside him not liveried (it happened to be a secretary); inside, a powerful species of maidservant, also one less powerful whose sole duty it was apparently to cherish upon her lap *en bébé* an immaculately white poodle-dog; and as a climax, whiter than all the rest in her silken dust coat and the numerous chiffon veils enveloping her loveliness—madame in person!

"But what madame?" inquired Emily, with some impatience.

God alone knew, uttered Hermose, devoutly; hazarding the impression that it might be madame

the English Queen of Spain, since the French and Spanish speech she used impartially was neither quite French nor quite Spanish. And Pantchika of the inn had been awed by this apparition beyond making her proper manners; and even Lastra the cobbler, experienced ladies' man that he was because of his profession, had barely managed to mumble the required information—only he himself, Hermose, had shown sufficient aplomb to gallop on ahead to warn the *etcheonda* of what approached.

"Magpie of a chatterbox that you are! What," demanded Madame Urruty, her patience at an end, "*was* the required information, then?"

"What but the situation, Madame Leocadie," replied Hermose with dignity, "of the establishment of your grandson, Monsieur Nacio!"

Emily Urruty struck her hands together. "It's the Varily, of course—La Lys in person!—as witness the lily-whiteness of everything, even the poodle-dog."

"And why," demanded Madame Urruty, with some foreboding, "does this lady bring her so-immaculate poodles and secretaries and white-linen menservants in search of my grandson Nacio?"

"The better to eat him with, my dear," quoted Emily, darkly. "Look to your husbands, ladies!—

Personally I intend to keep my handsome Esteban under lock and key."

The distinguished visitor, however, appeared to be indifferent to male conquest for the moment, somewhat to the disappointment of Esteban, who had shown in his day rather a nice taste in sirens. After one approving look at her surroundings—the ancient varicolored Basque village, all odd angles and shadows; above it, far up the valley, the looming orange-stained bulk of the Urruty hacienda, and higher still, at the foot of the pass it guarded, the crenellated outlines of the half-ruined Etcheverray Castle, the *diva* bade her secretary engage the *fonda* complete for an indefinite stay, and settled herself down to absorb atmosphere. She collected atmospheres as assiduously as Nacio had been wont in his earlier youth to collect birds' eggs.

La Lys usually pleased whom she chose to please, whether it be a shrewd old woman, or a young and serious dramatic poet, or a wide-eyed hero-worshipping little girl. She entered into the spirit of her environment with all the artless gayety of a child off on a holiday; even to the point of milking a cow on occasion—which she did with finished grace; and of making friends with Madame Urruty's bees—which was to the matriarch usually the final test of character.

"Once," she explained with a tender wistfulness, "I was a little country girl myself, you see!"

Yet the old woman looked somewhat askance at the *diva*, particularly at her marked devotion to the young of the family; who were encouraged to swarm about and over her with flattering persistence.

"Ah, youth, childhood!—is there anything quite like it?" sighed Lili, not too originally, perhaps. "Suffer the little ones"—truly, children are a passion with me!" she explained to Madame Urruty.

"So? Then why, if one may ask," inquired that forthright person, "have you suffered none of your own, madame?"

The other lifted delicate eyebrows, even managed a little blush. "You have perhaps not heard, dear lady, that I have never married?"

The matriarch gave her a puzzled, rather searching look; and Emily waited in amused trepidation for what might be coming next. But the good Fancine, having succumbed like her children to the fascinations of this adaptable guest, came innocently to her rescue: "Not married? *Mais*, how that is *triste*! Surely one of your beauty and great fame must have received many suitable opportunities? No?"

The other murmured noncommittally: "Ah, but my heart has never been sufficiently engaged, my dear. I am hopelessly, you see, a romantic. Until



THE MILLHOUSE WAS TRANSFORMED INTO A
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my heart is sufficiently engaged ——” she shrugged —“what would you? I give myself only to my art.”

“What fortitude!” Emily could not resist murmuring, and received in return a brief, passing glance which made her remark consolingly to her husband later: “Cheer up, old dear! Your turn next, I think. Just now she’s concentrating on little brother.”

“Does not she know that he is young enough to be her son?” frowned Esteban. Nacio’s simple, courteous gravity, together with his varied accomplishments in life, often kept people from realizing his youth.

“Of course she does, innocent. That’s why!—She *needs* youth, poor dear!”

“You think it is not mutual interest in their opera which brings her here?”

“I do not,” said his wife, crisply. “Nor which keeps her here! Nacio’s manly innocence has rather a fatal fascination for us frail, weak women—it seems they have met before, in Paris. Also, he is one of the coming young *littérateurs* of the day; also, my dear, this is what might be called a substantial family connection. The career of a dramatic soprano, no matter how brilliant, comes to an end at last, and rather sooner than most careers.—I could find it in my heart to be sorry for Lili, ’Steban,” she added, thoughtfully. “She’s beginning to feel her

age—which is far worse than looking it. Agriculturally speaking, lilies are strong feeders. Yes, she needs youth, lots of it. You'll notice that her companions, her secretaries, her maids, even her composer are all quite juvenile. And it isn't any interest in their opera which sends those two wandering hand-in-hand about the countryside *à la* Daphnis and Chloë—giving no little scandal, by the way, to our very observant peasantry; nor that keeps them up till all hours of the night, there in the singing-tower, while poor Sören patrols the place like a jealous lapdog, biting his nails in horrid rage—yes, dogs do bite their finger nails, darling; I've seen them at it.—Nor it won't be interest in their mutual art, mark my words, which will send Nacio hot foot after her when she goes away!”

“You mean,” said Esteban, patiently disentangling the somewhat involved thread of his wife's argument, “that the Varily intends to take on Nacio for a lover?”

“Worse! I mean that the Varily might quite as likely take on Nacio for a husband.”

Esteban whistled thoughtfully. “*Peste! Encore?* But would not the *fillette* have something to say to that?”

“Mariflor,” sighed Emily, “already adores the woman—trust La Lys! She soon saw that the short

cut to Nacio's heart lay through the child—until such time as short cuts are unnecessary.”

Esteban whistled thoughtfully. “*Peste! Encore?*”—it was getting to be quite a family byword. “*Madre de Dios*, will the *doguin* never learn wisdom in his loving?”

“There is no such thing,” said Emily sententiously, “as wisdom in male loving!—or if there is ——” she made a little face at him—“Urruty men rarely seem to practice it.”

“Ah, but how we practice wisdom in our marrying!” he replied simply, reaching for her with an expression of the eye that never failed to send a little shiver of happiness down her shapely young spine; and they talked no more just then of Nacio.

Among themselves, Emily and Esteban and Etcheverray got into the habit of speaking of Madame Varily privately as the Snake Princess, referring to old Anna-Damasa's folk-tale of the enchanted lady, turned into a snake, who needed only to be kissed three times on the lips by a pure youth in order to be turned back into a real woman. “And of course,” conceded Emily, thoughtfully, wishing to do the singer full justice, “she may run true to Snake-Princess form and surprise us yet; that is, if Nacio can still qualify for his part of the performance—which seems almost possible!”

"It is not only possible, but probable," said the Comte des Luynes, quietly. "Chastity is far more usual among men—especially Basque men—than people 'of the world' believe. Am I not right, Esteban?"

The athlete nodded. "*Mais, bien sûr!*" He added, simply, "The Eskualdunak marry younger than other peoples," and wondered why his wife chuckled.

Emily's prophecy was understated. When, after a few weeks the *diva* tired of pastoral simplicities and decided to return to civilization, Nacio did not follow her; he accompanied her—together with Sören Grön, still biting jealous finger nails; also with Mariflor, attended by her meekly protesting governess. The singing-tower transferred itself *in toto* to a house which had been taken for the purpose in St. Jean-de-Luz.

One had need, explained Lili in parting, to steep oneself even more deeply in ancients, now that Nacio had promised to create for her another great tragic rôle, a *moyen-age* part this time—"Have you not, my troubadour?" she murmured to him—dramatizing Queen Eleanor's exploits at the Courts of Love; notably the incident of her seduction of the young Saracen hero, Saladin. What a rôle for me, eh?" she said, raptly.

"And how appropriate!" agreed Emily; warning

her, however, that the ancientry of St. Jean-de-Luz had given way somewhat before the late American invasion.

"No matter; sufficient atmosphere remains, I dare say, for those who know how to select it," replied the *diva*, capably. "As for Americans—really, I find myself with less prejudice against them than others have. You see"—she made winning confession—"it is the dear naïve Americans who form my most generous audiences!"

"Really?—By the way," inquired Emily casually, "was it in Chicago or Cincinnati that you were born?"

The *diva*, whose slight, very charming accent usually gave rise to an interesting uncertainty as to whether she was of Viennese or Polish extraction, replied rather coldly, impelled by a certain exigence in the other's eye, that she had been born in neither place, but upon a Wisconsin farm.

"Ah, I thought I recognized a familiar Middle West 'r' here and there!" murmured her neighbor from Kentucky.—But the nuances of this little encounter-at-arms were quite lost upon Nacio, who wrote a more subtle English than he understood.

He was finding the companionship of the celebrated lady not only dazzling—that she should have come to him, here in his own world, seemed a thing unbelievable, unreal, part of the *haute legende* in

which he was living latterly—but also extremely stimulating, even more so than that of Sören Grön, who was presently bidden, his usefulness over for the moment, to betake himself and his opera elsewhere. The singer had only a short while left of her precious holiday, and did not wish to be reminded of work until she began rehearsals.

After the little man's discomfited departure, the pair settled down, negligibly companioned by a household of secretaries, accompanists, and the like, into a very pretty domesticity, thereby exciting no little comment in the neighborhood, of which Nacio remained happily unaware, caught up as he was into a roseate fever of poetry, music, and artistic creation. He was made free of Lili's sympathetic company at any hour of the day or night, whenever, in fact, he was not busy writing; aware that of all the women who had given their share toward his experience in life, this one was perhaps contributing most. Not that he belittled the contributions of others—Emily, his American sister-in-law, who had taught his young boyhood something of the gay camaraderie of women; English Dorothy, who had opened his eyes to their rare beauty; Rosemary, who had opened his heart to leave it echoing with remembered music; even the Moorish girl, Lalla Meimouna, who had offered him needful warning that he had left ado-

lescence behind him and was become what men call a man. But it seemed to Nacio that Lili Varily combined in her one person all these earlier tendresses of his, with something more added: the heady stimulus of success, of recognized accomplishment.

They were constantly together, forming no small part of the attractions of the St. Jean season that year—the graceful, gracious woman, costumed as always in purest white, attended by a tall Basque youth almost as beautiful as herself. The identity of the pair was no secret, although La Lys usually maintained a semblance of incognito during her holidays; so that admirers followed them about at a respectful distance, whether they walked abroad, or danced the *arin-arin* democratically in the square of a Sunday afternoon, native fashion (Lili was a charming dancer) or swam together at their usual hour—when crowds assembled along the *plage* to watch the celebrated figure of the *diva* being solicitously unshrouded at the water's edge, as for the unveiling of a statue.

The relations of the two were not subject to speculation, since La Lys had long since put her affairs out of the realm of speculation—no doubt, as one of the local French papers hinted delicately, another fortuitous conjunction of the planet Venus with the planet Mars. But what did puzzle the on-

lookers increasingly was the frequent appearance in their company of a very young girl, a slim-legged, rather distinguished child whose shining mane of hair was not blond in the resplendent Titian manner of the *diva's* own, but shone rather with the well-brushed amber gleam of Anglo-Saxon hair. Nor had her aristocratic, square-tipped little nose any resemblance whatever to the *diva's* slightly opulent Germanic profile. Lili Varily's various holiday incognitos had never before been encumbered by the presence of a child.

Indeed, the *diva* found herself almost as puzzled as others by the constant company of Mariflor; not through any encouragement of her own had the young girl been brought away with them to St. Jean-de-Luz. She had even protested lightly against the idea: "Does it not seem rather a pity to take the sweet child away from home just at this important point in her education?" For it was the season when other young girls of her age were being prepared for their winter's schooling.

But Nacio had replied disarmingly that such companionship as her own would do more for Mariflor's education than anything else he might offer; adding further that he had promised his foster daughter, after certain late experiences in Africa, never again to leave her behind him. "The *fillette* having the

idea," he explained, deprecatingly, "that without her protective presence I shall most certainly come to harm!"

The fact was that Mariflor, with the touch of clairvoyance that not infrequently accompanies so sensitive a temperament, had guessed quite accurately at something known only to Nacio and certain doctors he consulted privately from time to time, in Madrid and Paris: his late adventures in the Riff had completed a damage begun by the war exploits which had won Nacio his *Croix de Guerre*. At twenty-four, the magnificent physique, the powerful thews and sinews and smoothly playing muscles, the clear dark skin, all the vigorous virility of this youngest of the Urruty men, remembered in Morocco as Sidi Kebir—the Strong One—constituted merely a splendid shell, which might at the slightest undue strain put upon it collapse into invalidism. So long as he lived quietly enough in the invigorating ozone of the hills, with no great physical exertion, Nacio might yet win through to the ripe, hardy old age of his people, despite what was known in the family as his silver rib. But the life of cities was not for him, and never again the thrill of high adventure, whether by land or sea or air. Even the usual virile pleasures of his neighborhood were forbidden Nacio—pelota, boxing, skiing. The athlete

Esteban warned his brother with some impatience that he was becoming lazy and soft as Mariflor's pet, the pig Pinky, now established as pasha of the mill-house hog-pen; to which Nacio imperturbably replied that the sage beast was indeed his model—what poise, what serene complacency, what a true *type Basque*! No temperamental vagaries about the pig Pinky. * * * For the young man had a queer shame of making explanations, even to his old confessor Père Marcós, or to his life-long confidant, Etcheverray. Only Mariflor guessed, love being rarely as blind as the poets say.

So Lili, beneath her own temperamental vagaries an extremely practical person, made the most of what she recognized to be necessity, and set herself to Mariflor's completer subjugation; no difficult matter, considering her varied experience and the young girl's natural capacity for hero-worship. Mariflor's nature was too fine for jealousy; this growing intimacy of her two special heroes troubled her not at all, so long as it did not leave her out. Whom Nacio loved she must needs love also; and to her beauty-hungry eyes the somewhat overtended charms of the great *diva* offered an allure greater than any to which she had hitherto been subjected.

Indeed, seeing herself mirrored in so uncritically worshipful a gaze, Lili came to feel for the little

orphan a certain tenderness partly compounded of gratitude; began to lavish upon her something warmer than the charming gesture of affection she liked to bestow in public upon all pretty children. There was about Mariflor's appearance, too, a touch of familiarity which puzzled her.

"Where could I have seen you before, my Wonder Eyes?" she murmured one morning, when the young girl sat, an interested observer, in her hostess' bed-chamber, watching the glowing marble perfection of her body being vigorously massaged with perfumed oil in preparation for the day's toilet. That the lady lay entirely in a state of nature did not shock or even startle Mariflor, who accepted the ways of this new world quite as she found them.

"I do not think you ever could have seen me before, Lili"—the singer liked to be called thus, having reached that age when too much respect from youth is not desirable. "But," added Mariflor, shyly, "I have been seeing *you* before, all my life!—You see, I have your picture that used to hang beside my mother's bureau, all written across the front in purple ink."

"Ah?"—the other smiled, always interested in interest in herself. "The world must be rather full of pictures of me written across the front in purple ink!

But did your mother know me, Wonder-Eyes? What was her name?"

"Mrs. Douglass. Before she married, Rosemary Wynne."

The singer suddenly sat upright, pushing her mas-seuse aside as if the woman were a mechanical device. "Rosemary Wynne! You mean to tell me *you* are the child of Rosemary Wynne? But of course, of course! The hair, the eyes, the soft little husky voice! Go away," she said, briefly, to the maid who was endeavoring to shroud her nudity in padded white silk. She cupped her face in her hands and sat a long moment, thinking. For once she failed even to glance in the mirror to note whether the pose was effective.

Mariflor waited a while. Then she could no longer restrain herself. "Please—did you know my mother, then?" Lili's smile made her heart beat; it was more sincerely kind than she had ever seen it.

"When she was nearly as young as you, child. We were at Conservatory together—she the adoring little motherless girl, like you—I the adored big one. She planned to follow me to Europe, but was not permitted; later, against the stupid wishes of her very stupid family, she went on the stage. They did not forgive her for it; they were that sort. Provincial aristocrats, you know; strait-laced Puritan stock. She wrote me that she had secured a lead-

ing rôle in one of those wretched little traveling American opera companies. I always meant to do something better for her, as I had promised; but—life is so full, so full! Then I heard she had given up, married—some sort of impoverished college professor; fancy! When domesticity enters in at the door, ambition flies out at the window—remember that, Wonder-Eyes,” she added, parenthetically.

“Do you mean, Lili,” asked Mariflor, rather troubled, “that artists ought not ever to fall in love?”

“Who was talking about love, child?” The other sighed impatiently. “Rosemary married the man!—I dare say she was sorry for him; she had always a sort of talent for sacrifice. After that *bétise*, I washed my hands of her. Later I heard they were in serious trouble—Eh, well!—she is dead now?”

“Both she and my papa.”

“I remember, Nacio told me. *He* was no great loss, certainly, your papa!” she muttered, with some candor. “But Rosemary—ah, how sweet she was, my poor little lost friend! And what a gift, what promise! You remember her exquisite singing?”

“Could my mother sing?” asked Mariflor, in astonishment. “I never heard her sing!”

“Never heard?”—the other’s eyes filled slowly with tears. “So, her heart broke of it, then!—Eh,

well, now you shall do her singing for her. Sören told me of that!"

What the composer told her had failed to interest Lili, at the time, she being not without her natural *jalousie de métier*. But the most self-absorbed of natures has its generous moments. La Lys was capable of remorse for the girlhood friend she had failed; also she was, as Grön had remarked, indubitably an artist, with a respect above all human things for the divine gift of song.

Therefore she made Nacio that night rather a startling proposition. In a short time she must be returning to keep certain engagements in New York, also to put the completed *Atlantide* into rehearsal for an American *première*. Since his *fillette* proved to be the daughter of a gifted friend, whose gift she had inherited, she wished to take the girl away with her.

"Take Mariflor away? To sing with you?" he questioned, rather stupidly, bewildered by the suddenness of it.

"Heaven forbid!" was the laconic reply. "There has been already entirely too much singing! It was of course ignorance on your part—but Sören Grön knew better, little pig that he is!—much better. At her age? Why, already the vocal cords may be injured beyond repair! For two, three, perhaps, four

years the girl shall not sing a note; then—we shall see what we shall see. Meanwhile there are many preparations for an operatic career beyond the mere voice, my dear.” She outlined them briefly: toe-dancing, fencing, riding, all for the sake of the figure. “The day has passed when Elsa and Manon and the rest may be acceptably rendered by female tubs! She must have languages, of course, she must understand the great art of dress. In some ways you have builded better than you knew, there at your astonishing hacienda—the child appears to be a little Amazon of endurance, her Spanish and French and Italian are purer than mine, she wears her frocks with a certain *chic*—caught, I suppose, from that detestable American sister-in-law,” she admitted, grudgingly. “But even at her age, is the child as supple as this?” Standing before him, Lili bent her superb lithe body forward till her palms touched the floor, backward until she was able to kiss the wall behind her; Nacio meanwhile observing these evolutions with all the kindling ardor expected of him. He even expressed a certain appropriate jealousy of the wall thus honored; so that his hostess hastened, murmuring, to console him. But suspecting an adroit purpose on his part to change the subject, she returned to it insistently. Doubtless other considerations entered into her generosity than

remorse, or than abstract respect for the art she followed. The idyllic intimacy with her troubadour was perhaps not running quite true to form; there seemed a certain baffling reserve in the Basque nature. The child whose easily-won affections offered so obvious a short cut to his own might also, just possibly, serve as barrier to them.—Mariflor had a delicate immature type of beauty which would undoubtedly wax as her own waned; and Lili Varily knew, none better, the dangerous power of propinquity.

“Of course she must bring her governess person to companion her—my own maids will be naturally too busy to look after children. But your *fillette* does not need to learn much more out of books, my dear; what she needs is to steep herself in music, in the drama; to hear the singing of others; to absorb their methods, their interpretations. In my day,” said Lili, often quite frank about her age, “it was necessary to go for such things to Paris or Munich; now one gets them better in New York. And after all, the girl is American, you know!—not Basque.”

“*Mais, oui*—I myself,” said Nacio, “have always had the intention to take the *fillette*, with my brother and his wife, to revisit America one day, to find perhaps her family there.”

“A waste of time. Who cares anything about

family nowadays?—usually a lot of dull and meddlesome people one would never have chosen for friends!” remarked Lili, with a frankness which shocked the Basque into surprised silence. “No, no, what Mariflor needs is not to find her American family, but to find her American public!—which spells success or failure in my profession.”

“I fear,” hesitated Nacio, “that so young a girl would not be quite happy to go away from us, who are all the friends she has known.”

The other gave an impatient shrug. “Of course she won’t be happy—any more than she would be happy about taking castor oil. But she’s old enough not to be so much humored, my dear—*quite* old enough to fall in l ——” She broke off, biting her lip. Nothing in her experience so stirred the dormant passions of young males as the suspicion that they were themselves beloved. “Do you quite realize,” she said instead, rather tersely, “what an opportunity you are hesitating over, my dear man? I, Lili Varily, to take in hand this awkward little unknown, put her through her paces, show her the ropes—in other words, lead her right into the middle of a career? Believe me, it’s not an opportunity that will happen twice! I want,” she said—and the unmistakable note of sincerity in her voice vanquished Nacio’s last scruple—“to do for Rosemary Wynne’s

little girl what I did not do for Rosemary herself. Do you think it would be right to deny her such an opportunity? Have you anything better to offer?

At that he winced, realizing suddenly how little indeed he had to offer by comparison—a retired life on a Basque hill-farm, the protection of a man who might one day, unless he went his ways softly, become an invalid on her hands.

“I do realize,” he said, slowly, lifting her fingers to his lips, “and I love you for it. But, kindest of women, you must know that only to one whom I honor as well, whom I trust as I trust myself, would I give over the care of the child Rosemary left to my keeping.”

It was a declaration of esteem unique in Lili Varily’s experience of declarations, and she received it with mixed feelings; consoling herself, however, with the reminder that wherever Mariflor went, there Nacio must inevitably follow; and that wherever Nacio followed, there inevitably she would be herself. She knew not only the power of propinquity, but of carefully applied absence.

Nacio, the next time he and Mariflor were alone together—which was not often nowadays—told her of his decision to let her go with Madame Varily to America. The girl danced up and down, clapping her hands with pleasure. “Oh, Nacio, to see America

already! how wonderful! You're coming too, of course? When do we start?"

He had to look away from her when he told her that he could not leave just then the new work he was engaged upon. A little silence fell.

"You're not," she said, slowly, incredulously, "giving me away to Lili—are you, Nacio?"

"*Dieu*, no!" he exclaimed, startled. "What an idea! Only lending you to her, my darling—until you are ready to come back to us."

It was the first time he had called her his darling, and Mariflor found the endearment heartening. "Then it won't be for very long!" she sighed, brightening a little.

"Certainly not. Only a very few years."

"A very—few—years!" Again her face contracted with such a spasm of fright that he took her onto his knee, great girl that she was, to comfort her; explaining the splendid things that had been planned, kissing her meanwhile with light butterfly kisses on all the spots she liked best to be kissed—the tip of her nose, the ear-lobes, lastly the throbbing lids of her closed eyes. For once, however, she did not burst out laughing because it tickled, but lay limp against him, eyes still closed, so white and still that for a moment he thought she had fainted, and spoke sharply to her, "Mary-flower!"

The eyes opened on him then, their pupils so enlarged that they were for the moment black rather than clear amber. "It's all right, I'll be good," she reassured him, a little strangely. "I'll go away with Lili, of course, and do whatever she says, and learn to sing well enough to sing all your heroines for you when she is too old, as you say. But"—her lip trembled so that she caught it between her teeth—"I can't—I can't help wondering what you'll do without me! Who you'll try out your lines on to make them come alive; who'll keep you from sitting up all night mooning ——" for often enough, seeing from her window the lights burning too late at the mill-house, Mariflor had gone pattering over in bathrobe and slippers to remind him to go to bed. "You see, you need me more than you realize, Nacio," she said, piteously, "because you've always had me!"

He reminded her soothingly, laughing a little, that there had been quite a number of years when he had not had her. "And it is not, my *fillette*, as if we should not see each other often, meanwhile. *Alors!* Do you forget that even in a month or two I shall be following over to America for the *première* of our opera!"

She caught at that, desperately. "You promise, Nacio?—you *promise* to come then?"

"Of course, of course, *petite!*"—He was making distress signals over her head at some one who stood in the opening door, watching them. The signals said more plainly than words, "Please go away!" But Lili chose to misinterpret them, and came gliding into the room, with a swish of white silken draperies that was almost like a pounce.

"Why all these promises, my poor *fillette!*" she said, very sweetly. "The difficulty will be, I suspect, to keep Nacio from following us!—he will be so anxious to see his brain child, and to see you, of course, and—I think," she added, with tender significance—"he will also be wanting to see *me* a little!—eh, my troubadour?" Passing the chair where they sat together, Lili ran her fingers lightly, possessively, through the young man's curls, smiling down meanwhile into the tear-stained face against his shoulder. Whereupon Mariflor the docile, the even-tempered, the adoring, jumped from her place and stamped her foot, crying out rudely: "You shan't call me 'your poor *fillette!*' I'm not your *fillette* at all!"—and rushed sobbing from the room.

"Poor baby! So distressed," sighed Lili, seating herself in Mariflor's place on the chair-arm. "And what an upsetting experience for you, too, my poor dear! Never mind—soon she'll be loving me instead, so that she will hate to leave me as much as she

hates to leave you! Romantic young girls must always attach themselves like this to some one—perhaps it is just a little wiser that she attach herself now to me.” Again she ran her fingers electrically through his hair; a caress the disturbed youth found singularly comforting.

“I do not see,” he said, relaxing into the enveloping perfumed warmth of her presence, “how any one could resist loving you, Lili, who are so gracious and so—*Mon Dieu!* how you are beautiful!”

For reward she gave him both scented palms to kiss; the inner blue-veined bend of her elbow; next, leaning to his demand, the soft throbbing hollow at the base of the throat “where the song comes from”; and by the time, in course of natural progression, his seeking mouth reached her seeking mouth, Nacio had almost forgotten how piteously the innocent wet eyelids of his *fillette* quivered against his lips like a caught bird in the hand. * * *

In the end, Nacio broke his final promise to Mari-flor. He had returned home alone after their departure, the ardors of creation no longer sustaining him; having tested anew the truth of the French saying that “to part is to die a little,” but concealing his desolation as best he could because of the singular lack of sympathy he sensed at the *etcheonda*. News of him had come to his shocked neighborhood from

the wider neighborhood of St. Jean-de-Luz, and both friends and family appeared to be keeping certain opinions to themselves, rather eloquently. Even Emily, usually his most understanding of allies, barely spoke to him about Mariflor's departure, and that curtly.

"Time you were growing up, young fellow my lad," she said, with a decided edge to her voice. "Getting to be a big boy now. All very well for you to make manly oblations to Snake Fairies, if you feel you must—but, really, you know, you needn't have sacrificed that baby!" She had become very fond of her little motherless compatriot.

Nacio's hurt and surprised dignity did not permit him to offer explanations.

Even Madame Urruty made but the one grave comment, "The *fillette* went from you willingly, my son?"

"In the end, certainly, gran'mère! She came to appreciate the privilege. Mariflor had from the first a great admiration of my friend, as you know, who is very charming with children."

"*Eh, ça commence! Il se perd,*" muttered the old lady, with a gesture of resignation; but what it was that commenced to lose itself, she did not say.

Certainly not Mariflor. The flood of enthusiastic letters from her which continued to inundate the

family somewhat reassured them; Nacio always put his own into their hands without comment.

They lived, she wrote, in an elegant little villa, built high, high up on top of other houses, which had a garden of grass and flowers around it, still abloom in this late Indian summer.

"A villa with a garden, built on the top of other houses?"—Emily had to explain the American pent-house, and the why of it, to an incredulous Basque audience.

"*Alors!*" commented Madame Urruty, shrugging. "Next you will tell us that in America they graze their flocks on top of the establishment!"

New York, Mariflor assured them, was incredibly more wonderful even than one had dreamed; spread out for mile and mile below, glittering with long strands of diamonds; turrets and towers standing up tall against the sky like the battlements of giant castles, among which soared, droning, great dragon-flies which it was hard to believe were mere airplanes like Nacio's old *White Goose*. New York at night was truly a mirage city; such a *Fata Morgana* as Nacio used to say the poetry about; "magic casements opening on the foam of perilous seas, in faëry lands forlorn."

Emily found her patriotism much gratified by these rapt descriptions, though also puzzled; it had

not occurred to her to regard the metropolis of her native land as a dream-city of mirage, nor the perilous thoroughfare of New York Harbor quite as a faëry sea forlorn.

By day, Mariflor admitted, it was all different. "But then, of course, most things are different by day!"—she did not dwell upon that. Her new duties and lessons kept her very busy; duties and lessons quite other than those with Nacio. She had daily her piano, her theory of music, her dancing, her gymnasium lessons—"Uncle 'Steban would be pleased to see how easily I have already learned to skin the cat."

Here Madame Urruty again looked puzzled. Need one travel to the far places of earth merely for lessons in domestic taxidermy? "Look, it goes like this, gran'mère," explained young Wally, condescendingly, and showed her on the nearest tree branch.

Mariflor, she said, had met a number of people who remembered her mother. "But not my papa—I think he did not move perhaps in operatic circles," she explained, quaintly. Singularly few of Lili's friends, however, appeared to be real Americans, at least they were nearly always something else, too—German or Italian or Russian or Scandinavian,—so that she had use for all the languages Nacio had made her study. They were very kind to her, Lili's

friends, always bringing her pretty presents, especially the oldish gentlemen. ("They would!" commented Emily, grimly.) She was richer already by a little string of seed-pearls, a white fur jacket, a ring with a big blue stone in it—a star-sapphire, Lili called it—also a grown-up peignoir as elegant as any of Lili's own, with pink swan's-down on it. And Lili was kindness itself, whenever she had time to be; often let Mariflor help her dress, or share her breakfast-luncheon in bed, or even after-theater nibbles, unless some friend had come home with her to spend the night. "Otherwise I don't see very much of her; of course, she's always so in demand."

She and Mademoiselle were to have tickets for every opera, whether Lili was in the cast or not, in order that she might compare Bori's manner with that of Jeritza, and note how such-and-such a Carmen differed from the great Geraldine Farrar tradition. And once, when somebody very powerful in the Metropolitan had come back with Lili for the mid-night supper, she, Mariflor, had been fetched down out of bed by Sören Grön, all sleepy as she was and in her nightgown ("But with the pink swan's-down peignoir over it") to sing "The Valley of Andoce" for him; and afterwards the gentleman had pinched her cheek so kindly that it hurt, and muttered "*Sì, sì, the bel canto!* In two years, perhaps, when more of

muscle makes itself on this so-lovely diaphragm, and the husk takes itself out of the lower register—eh?” After that, she was never allowed to sing at all, nor to hum to herself, nor even to talk aloud while in the open air; and already the doctor said the husk was getting better.

“Doctor?”—Madame Urruty frowned. “And for what reason does a healthy girl of such an age require the advice of a *médecin*? I mock myself of it!”

Nacio explained, having received advices of his own on the subject, that there was some slight strain of the vocal cords which required time and care to correct, but which had nothing to do with Mariflor’s quite excellent health. For letters other than Mariflor’s came frequently to him from New York—large faintly-scented white envelopes, inscribed in purple chirography—which Nacio did not turn over to his family.

“They certainly seem to be grooming the child for a career!” commented Emily, sighing a little; remembering how there had always been something which set little Mariflor apart, some odd, wistful, faëry quality, as if at any moment the girl might mount her absurd attendant pig like a troll out of Peer Gynt, and gallop off through the air to the Hall of the Mountain King. Once having entered the Hall of the Mountain King, she suspected that such elfin

visitors were not often permitted a return to safe, and common earth again.

Mariflor's letters never suggested loneliness, however; once only she mentioned the fact that she missed playmates. There seemed to be no children in operatic circles, she wrote, nor in all New York, for that matter; except those she met when she and Mademoiselle took their prescribed daily walk in a near-by Park, primly attended by maids and governesses. "Oh yes, and some who live on a roof below ours that is a hospital, where tuberquulous ones" (Mariflor's spelling was often rather impressionistic) "have to stay out-of-doors all the time, even in winter. But they are even nicer to play with than other children, so funny and jolly—Bette would adore them! And so will you, Nacio, when you come. I often go to visit them when Mademoiselle and I are s'posed to be taking our walks, and I promised you'd tell them some *contes des fées*, and maybe make a little play just for them, when you come." (That was the constant refrain and burden of all her letters to Nacio—"when you come.")

Mademoiselle, it appeared, had worked up quite a dislike for their hostess, and took a meek, malicious pleasure in thwarting Lili's plans whenever possible; hence her connivance in the hospital visits. "She cannot understand, poor Mam'selle, why tem-

peramental artists need to stay in bed all day, and wake people up at any hour of night just to talk.” (“Good for Ma’m’selle!” commented Emily. “Do raise her salary, Nacio.”) “And she doesn’t seem to like it because Sören Grön stays with us so much—though why shouldn’t he, if Lili likes to have him?” commented Mariflor, accustomed to the wide, unquestioning hospitalities of the Urruty establishments. “Only Ma’m’selle gets cross because he comes into my room before I’m dressed, being ‘all girls to-gezzier’ as he says.”

Meanwhile the *Atlantide*, she wrote, was almost ready for production. “The director makes them rehearse now with all the drop-scenes Uncle Jaun de Maytie designed, the great triple harbor of Atlantis, the black and red city with gilded roofs, the pirogue in which the courtesan and her friends escape as the city begins to sink, the Pyrenean cave with all the queer prehistoric picture-writings, where the Atlantean refugees set up their first sacrifice-altar. And when the poor beautiful courtesan begins her farewell lament, knowing that it is she who will be sacrificed because there is no need for her in this clean new wilderness they’ve come to—oh, Nacio darling, it’s just all I can do not to burst out into the aria myself, I who saw the music, the words, the very story of it being born there in our own mill-house!

But I don't, I never even whisper it—because I do so want to save my voice to sing it for you some day, like you said, when Lili will have grown too old.”

A silence followed the reading of this letter. Pedro Urruty asked rather sternly of Nacio, “Does this young girl, my son, understand the meaning of the word courtesan?”

The young man flushed. “I do not know, father.”

“I dare say,” commented Emily, dryly, “that she is beginning to learn it.”

Some days later, Nacio received a cablegram saying that the *première* of the *Atlantide* had been somewhat advanced, giving him just time to reach New York if he made haste. He had been postponing his departure from boat to boat, for several reasons. One was that he wished to give Mariflor as much time as possible to adjust herself to life without him; another, that his grandmother seemed that year to be feeling more than usual the change of seasons, always a danger period to the very old; there was a noticeable irascibility in small matters, an increased trembling of the strong veined hands. Others noticed it also, spoke of it one to another sadly in the beautiful old phrase of the peasants: “Madame Leocadie commences to hear her whisper from the pines.”

Esteban and Emily, who had intended accom-

panying their brother to New York for the occasion, felt that it was not a time to leave the *etcheonda*, so that in the end the young man started off alone to his American triumph. At Cherburg he was stopped by a telegram from his father, which said, simply, "Return, it is our mother."

Nacio had still very much a mother of his own, the plump and plaintive Madame Fancine; but when Urruty men of any generation, even to small Wally, spoke among themselves of "our mother," they meant the matriarch. It was then that Nacio broke his promise to Mariflor. He took a plane from the nearest airport, pausing only long enough to cable Lili Varily not to expect him for the *première*.

Madame Urruty, having attended early mass that morning as a suitable reminder to Heaven that one of her young, being about to adventure the perils of the deep, might require Divine assistance, had risen suddenly to her feet during the elevation of the Host, stood swaying a moment like a strong old pine that feels the giving way of roothold, and then, to the horror of the congregation, had fallen silently headlong. By the time Nacio came she was conscious again, lying strangely small and stiff on her great catafalque of a bed, her eyes wide as a child's with terror because she could not speak. Esteban, at her

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side, was weeping openly and unashamed, having never before in all his life seen their *madre* afraid.

Some relief came into that terrible, anxious gaze when Nacio bent over her, however; if she was to die, Madame Urruty preferred to die *en grande tenue*, with all her remaining descendants grouped suitably about her. The same day, formal summons went forth that was in the nature of an edict: Madame Leocadie Urruty *née* Jauregui prepared, at such and such an hour of such and such a day, to receive at her *domec* those offices of the church known as extreme unction, and desired the supplementary prayers of all friends and neighbors who cared to offer them.

They came from far and near; shaken old Baltasar Jauregui with his seven sons, the ambassadorial cousin—all, in fact, who could manage to arrive in time by railway, automobile, and airplane. The company included a gentleman, somewhat enfeebled by years but still of a noticeable and jaunty elegance, in whom Emily was touched to recognize Don Jaime, Duque de los Canellos, once the lover of the girl who had been Leocadie Jauregui, accompanied by his grandson, Josef-Maria, Marqués de Vicianá, familiarly known as Pépe, former *fiancé* to Bette. And on the day indicated appeared in the Etcheverray meadows, also, as mysteriously as a growth of mush-

rooms over night, some gypsy tents in charge of the tribal chieftain, Matteo Amayo, who gave simple greeting to Pedro: "*Sharishan*, cousin; we too have come, we others"—and took up his vigil, proudly humble, outside the door of the Urruty house.

All the village, marching on foot, followed Père Marcós with the Holy Sacrament, augmented by the inhabitants of every farm they passed. Those who could not find room in house or patio knelt in the field outside, weeping, praying; only the children they had brought, too young to understand, ran about and amused themselves as children will; so that the old woman laid out on her bed above heard them, and her twisted face twisted further into the semblance of a smile. Pleasanter sounds, perhaps, than tears and prayers to take out into the long silence, the voices of children playing.

But after this most solemn of ceremonies, than which nothing is more final except the funeral celebration itself, Madame Urruty disconcertingly began to mend; gained strength visibly, even recovered the use of a few words, although she used them difficultly and very cautiously, as though listening to a stranger speak. During this time, which lengthened out into a week, a fortnight, Nacio was almost her constant company. Her son Pedro, who had for so many years taken his father's place to her, could

not bear to see the indomitable old Amazon thus laid low, but spent hours on end doing sentry duty below her open window, in the company of their neighbor, Etcheverray, smoking pipe after pipe that she might know him near. Esteban, always her favorite, might not look at her without unmanly tears starting, which made her frown; Pedro's wife, even Emily, whom she greatly loved, became again to her fancy mere strangers within the gates; the untiring, tender ministrations of young Bette she took quite for granted, as the very sick take necessary food and drink. But whenever Nacio came within her range of vision, something stirred in the dumb eyes and she made a feeble gesture of the hand as if bidding him come nearer. It was as if she had something to say to Nacio which greatly needed remembering.

There was in the young man that peculiar quality of acute sympathy, almost of divination, which is mistakenly called feminine because more often seen in women than in men. He understood his grandmother without necessity for speech; almost, such was the vividness of his imagination, he became for the moment his grandmother—stretched out there so stiff and still, struggling, struggling with all the powerful will that was in her, to hold on for another day, another hour, another minute to the familiar life she loved. So would he himself, thought Nacio soberly,

give way only inch by inch in the long secret fight he must make hereafter alone.

He never forgot to keep her meticulously informed of happenings in the outside world, her own world of field and hedgerow, of village, barnyard, weather. * * * The ladies Olhagarray, he told her, were about to replace the broken tiles on their roof in honor of the forthcoming visit of their rich married sister, wife of the wine-grower, Hercule Olhaiby, out of America. Madame Urruty managed a difficult nod of approval; it was, her eyes told him, high time the ladies Olhagarray offered such needed attention to their *ménage*.

"St. Martin's summer holds long this year, gran'mère—" on another occasion. "The winter pasturage should be excellent. Today, what do you think? I heard a bird cry as if one had already April! It went—see, like this." He whistled a sweet, shrill note; Nacio was always good at bird-calls.

Her lips moved thickly. "Mavis—" she muttered.

"*Bien sûr*, it was a mavis!" he cried, delighted. "In other woodlands the mavis waits till February at least to ring the bell in its throat, but here with us—*tiens!* Urruty birds make apparently their own seasons!"

Again one day he brought her, mysteriously,

something wrapped in an old shepherd's plaid, which was, he said, a surprise offering from his old dog, Olivier. "He is not one, *le brave vieux*, to forget his duty to the *etcheonda*. You recall Mariflor's fine young Briard bitch out of Andorra?—*Regardes-moi-là!* True grandsons of old Nagarro."

He opened the plaid to exhibit a litter of three fat nuzzling sheep-dog puppies, of a breed peculiar to certain valleys of the Pyrenees. Something of the old smile twitched Madame Urruty's stiff lips; pleased, quizzical, a little sad. She said in her difficult thick whisper: "*Ça marche*——"

"But certainly it marches!—the year, life, everything!—Except only myself, you would say?" he added, divining the cause of the faint shadow in her eyes. "Insatiable that you are!—will you not give me time?" he laughed, knowing only too well that time was a thing she could not give him.

When he came the next morning, however, he saw, to his amazement, that the matriarch was suddenly come back to them, speech, memory, and all. "*Grâce à Dieu*, what have we here?" he cried, joyously. "A miracle! Let me call the others quickly!"

But she stopped him. "*Pas encore; attends-toi*——" She spoke with great distinctness, but faintly and very rapidly, as if trying to make up for lost time. "*Tiens! doguin*, what is it that you do here?"

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Was there not some reason, some reason of importance, that you go elsewhere?" Her brows knit painfully with the effort to concentrate.

"The *première* of my *Atlantide*," he reminded her, cheerfully. "It had a *succès fou*, gran'mère!—I have here the American and Paris journals to read to you when you are stronger."

She nodded, as if such success were a mere matter of course. "They are at least intelligent, *ces Américains*! But you, my son, you were not present? You stayed because you thought I had need of you?" She frowned with annoyance. "What a folly! A young man hanging about an old woman's sick-room!—and what need have I of human company, who should be now concerning myself with matters divine? Have I not received the final offices of the Church?" A glint of familiar humor crinkled her eyes. "You somewhat exaggerate the importance of your company, young man!"

Nacio replied, grinning back at her, that he had by no means foregone his visit to America on her account, but simply in order to complete the new poetic drama he had commenced under the charming inspiration of Lili Varily.

"Ah!" said his grandmother, with some respect. "And you now complete it?"

Nacio found himself obliged to admit that he had

not only failed so far to complete the work, but that the very sight of it was become distasteful to him.

"So? And why is this?" she demanded, uneasily; but answered herself at once. "*Tiens!* I know, me, I know very well why! You bore yourself, that is all. One has it dull here nowadays, with nothing but doctors, dolors, priests—*je m'en foutre!* The poetry declines to come, no doubt, because its charming inspiration has removed herself. No?" She shot him a sidelong searching glance, quite in the old manner.

He admitted that this was perhaps true.

"*Alors,*" she smiled, reaching out a feeble finger to twist at his curls—few feminine fingers seemed able long to resist Nacio's curls. "You have been a good boy, *mais un bon petit garçon, oui.* But soon now the need for such unnatural patience will pass. And afterwards—you will not often bore yourself, I dare say, by too long visits to the *etcheonda!*"

Nacio replied quietly that, on the contrary, he expected to spend the greater part of his life at the *etcheonda*.

"*C'est inutile,*" she declared, impatiently. "Such sentiment for home does any Basque credit, yes; but it is Esteban who is *hereu* here, not you! Take your freedom of a younger son, *mon ami.* Why not?" Something carefully expressionless in his expression

caught her eye, what was it that shrewd eye, indeed, failed to mark? "Eh, *mon fils*, *qu'as tu done?* What is wrong? You conceal me something here!"

For a moment Nacio was tempted sorely. It would have been good indeed to tell the warm perennial motherhood of her what was wrong; to pour into an ear which had received so many human confidences his chagrin, his growing dismay that the fine physical mechanism of his young body should have played him traitor, would never again permit such a life as was expected of him, out among men, "taking his freedom."—But the moment passed; he recalled in time the over-weening pride she felt, famous old stock-breeder that she was, in the physical fitness of her progeny. He said instead, simply, "I think perhaps that I am a little lonely."

She nodded, reassured. "*Mais bien sûr!* the poetic temperament is often lonely. No? That is something which easily corrects itself! What you need now," she said in a matter-of-fact manner, "is your woman, *mon fils*; a man remains but half a man until he finds his woman.—You miss her, then, so much?" Her voice was suddenly very gentle, almost wistful.

Taken by surprise, he answered, humbly, "More than I had believed it possible to miss anyone again, gran'mère."

"*Tiens!* We always suffer more than we believe

possible again.—But this time I think one must be very sure, *doguin*. You no longer”—her eye was keen for the moment as a surgeon’s scalpel—“regret your poor friend Rosemary?”

“Regret? Always, gran’mère. But—I must tell you something rather terrible.” He made a confession he had not made before, even to himself. “I can no longer remember Rosemary’s face!—or rather, I do not know if it is hers that I recall, or Mariflor’s.”

She made a consoling gesture. “But that is nothing terrible, little son, that is very well done on the part of nature! I too, when I look at you, am not always certain now if it is you I see, or one of the fine lads I lost” (there had been nine of them altogether, sons and grandsons) “or my Urruty himself, your grandfather, God rest him! If the heart could not forget a little, it would break with the first grief. *N’importe!* You love again. And she? She loves you in return?”

“I think so, gran’mère.”

“You think? But go at once and make sure. Love is no thing to put aside until one has leisure for it! In these matters”—her eyes closed despite herself with weariness—“it is not well to listen overmuch to us elders. Age is not always wisdom; often it is but a forgetting. A man loves where he must.

Women are more adaptable. Go, marry yours if you can, and bring her home properly to the *etcheonda*. If not—then do you stay with her, my son. She will be the better for your protection.”

He said, lifting the gnarled fingers reverently to his lips: “Yours is an age, gran’mère, to which any man would do well to listen!—But what have such as I to offer in place of a great career?”

“*Flûte!* ‘Such as you?’” she smiled mockingly, still with closed eyes. “Look well into the mirror there, *mon petit homme si honnête*, and ask yourself what woman in possession of her senses would refuse for a little fame a man ‘such as you!’—with the promise of sons like you, eh?”

He said, lightly because he was much moved, “But is she not still a little young for such decisions?”

Then indeed the weary eyes opened upon him, staring. “Too young? The *diva*, Varily, *too young?*”

Nacio thought her mind wandering again, and reminded her gently that it was not of Madame Varily they spoke, but of Mariflor. “For whom I must surely wait at least until she is old enough to know her own heart. No?”

It was as if two lamps lit themselves in his grandmother’s dim eyes before she closed them again. “Ah!” she whispered. “True! It was of Mariflor we spoke, to be sure—the little Mariflor! How one

grows stupid with approaching sleep! Yes, yes for her you must wait awhile. But not too long, *doguin!* and not—apart. Women are adaptable. *Sois tranquille*, my little one, you shall not lose her, your Mariflor! It is I who will bring her back to you—*moi qui parle.*” Her voice, strengthening for a moment, trailed off drowsily into silence. * * * But later, when Bette came with a tray of tempting food, she could not wake her grandmother; nor could any of them waken her again.

Some days after the funeral—and what a funeral! as the village consoled itself in mournful pleasure—Nacio sat in his mill-house study, staring helplessly at a pile of disordered manuscript, wondering how he could start on it again, whether he ever could start on it again—when he became aware of an unusual commotion in his hog-pen outside, a clean little rock-walled Pyrenean hog-pen where the pig Pinky had set up housekeeping with his several consorts. Such a series of squeals and snorts occurred there as to send the alert sheep-dog, Andorre, bristling to the door in defense of her property; and there, as Nacio turned, he saw standing a very slender vision in a white fur jacket, with shining hair coiled in demure young-lady fashion on the nape of her neck, who at sight of his incredulous face ran suddenly, weeping and laughing, into his arms.

"Nacio! Nacio darlingest! I tried to get here in time, I tried *so* hard—and yet I've come too late!"

"You should not have come at all," he reproved her, presently, with unconvincing attempt at sternness. "Gran'mère would have been the last to encourage such foolishness. I cannot think what Lili was dreaming of, to let you come!"

"Lili? Pooh! It was she who made me come. That is—— Well, if you must know the truth, she has turned me out!"

"Turned you out?" He stared, uncomprehending.

She nodded airily. "Just like that! No, no, Nacio; don't scold me, don't you scold me, too, please, *please!*"—She was weeping and laughing again, so that he held her close. "You see, when Aunt Emily wrote you had given up your writing entirely, I couldn't bear it, I just couldn't any longer!—You missed me more than you thought you would, didn't you?"

He admitted it.

"Then, when I heard gran'mère was really dying—well, I just knew I *had* to come back to you! People with creative temperaments need great calm of spirit, Bette taught me that long ago—and I am your 'calm of spirit.' Aren't I? Aren't I, Nacio?"

He admitted that, too, helplessly.

"So then, I laid my plans. It was pretty terrible,

though, she was so furious at the last! I had never seen anybody really angry before. It was all because—— Well, the fact is, I've lost my voice! Really lost it, you see; not just—mis-laid it."

He had noted at once the increased huskiness of her speech. "But," he protested, startled, "it is only a cold, *fillette*; you are tired, a trifle *enrhumée*?"

"No, I'm not *enrhumée* in the least," she said, with a little air of triumph. "I never take cold! It's just the vocal cords. They're done for, *fini*, thank Heaven! That was what made Lili so furious. But even so," said the girl with a tremulous touch of hauteur, "she had no right to say to me the things she said—terrible things, Nacio. That I was an impostor, an ingrate, a 'viper in the bosom'—whatever she meant by that! She said she had no use whatever for people who deliberately threw away opportunities; that she was going to pack me right off to some of my mother's people, who wouldn't want me, but might just possibly take me in out of family pride when they heard she was done with me. I said, thanks, that wouldn't be at all necessary, because I would go straight home to you. And then—oh, Nacio, it was worst of all! She's been angry at me for quite awhile, anyway, because you didn't come—though why she blamed me I can't imagine! I tried

to explain you didn't come because of gran'mère; but Lili didn't seem to think grandmothers could matter much.—She didn't know ours, did she?"

"No," said Nacio, briefly.

"And when I said I could always go home to you—then she lost her temper entirely; asked me what I meant by 'home' anyway? Was I quite shameless, holding on to a man who wanted to be free of me? —Didn't I know I was nothing but a charity child you were all hoping to get rid of——"

Nacio took a deep breath. "Madame Varily said that?"

"Yes—but oh dear, don't go berserk about it, darling! Who cares what she said? Don't look like that, please, please!" exclaimed Mariflor, in dismay. "You frighten me when you look like that—lots more than she did!"

So Nacio stopped looking "like that."

"And, anyway, I soon made her understand her mistake. I told her she was *quite* wrong, I was not a charity child at all!—that I even had a house of my own over in Andorra, where I could go and live under the darling old fatherly eye of the prince-bishop himself, if ever you got tired of having me here. And I could, couldn't I?"

"If," said Nacio.

The laconic syllable seemed to reassure her; she

hugged him, beaming. "And so I sent Ma'm'selle right down to get tickets on the first steamer that sailed, and one sailed that very day, and—here I am!"

He said, schooling his voice to quietness: "But I cannot understand how the woman—how anyone—could have been angry with you because your poor little voice became 'done for,' as you say?"

She began to chuckle. "Well, you see—it was because I did for it myself! Listen, Nacio!—but promise you won't scold? You remember those children I wrote you about, who lived on the roof below ours?"

"The 'tuberquulous' ones?—Yes."

"Well, when I decided I couldn't bear your being without me any longer, I began to go and sing for them every day, out in the open air—and they simply loved it! Not only that, but whenever Lili was out of the house I'd open all the windows in my room, and let the dampness in, and simply yell and yell at the top of my lungs! So pretty soon she noticed how much worse the hoarseness was getting, and sent again for the throat doctor. And he said, as soon as he heard me speak, 'What the devil have you been doing?'—so I told him. And then he said, quite sadly, 'Well, that's that! The damage is be-

yond repair, this time. No opera for you, young lady!’ ”

“Oh, Mary-flower, Mary-flower,” groaned Nacio, appalled. “What have you done? Your career, Rosemary’s lost career, sacrificed to—what?”

“Your career, of course!” was the cheerful reply. Seeing his distress, she tried to comfort him. “The voice isn’t *all* gone, you know; some of it may come back, the doctor said—enough to sing for you with always—but just not enough for opera. And you’ll have to take very special care of me, he said.” She nodded, complacently. “In fact”—she added, greatly daring—“we’ll have to take very special care of each other, two old crocks like us, with our silver rib and our vocal cords and all!”

He understood then that he had not, after all, to fight out his life-long secret battle quite alone—Mariflor knew. * * * And suddenly Nacio, who thought he had forgotten Rosemary’s face, saw it again, clearly as once near death on the African *bled* he had seen the mirage of Fata Morgana; heard the very tones of her voice issuing from her child’s lips, huskily sweet, happy;—and knew that what has been, is; that the true things change but do not pass; that the arbitrary divisions man makes for his convenience of time and space are untrue, as artificial as the mechanical ticking of a clock. * * *

NACIO, *His Affairs*

Later, seated paterfamilias-fashion, with his *fillette* perched in her wonted place on the arm of his chair, Nacio told her what he could of the matriarch's passing, of her final promise to bring Mariflor back to him.

"Which she kept, of course," said the girl, as proudly as if she were of the great old woman's blood.

While he talked, unconsciously watching her expressive hands—for Mariflor had inherited, with other things of her mother, the sensitive, smooth artist fingers—he noted suddenly the ring she had boasted of in one of her letters—rather a fine star sapphire.

"Who gave you that?" he broke off to ask, abruptly.

"Lili herself, on one of her affectionate days. She said I was to keep it always, to remember how we loved each other. But Nacio—I'm afraid I never did love Lili quite as much as she seemed to expect! And now——"

"Take the thing off," he said, harshly, and threw it into the fire. "You shall have a better ring to replace it," he added by way of consolation. "Let me see—how old are you now, *petite*?"

"As if you didn't know! I'm very nearly fifteen."

NACIO, *His Affairs*

His face fell. "Only that? And I had thought you almost a woman!"

"But I am *quite* a woman, really! I believe, Nacio," she said, very earnestly, "that when you have loved one person ever since you can remember, and haven't anybody else in the world even to think about—why, it grows you up younger than other people, maybe! Don't you suppose so?"

He did not answer. Instead, he lifted her from his chair-arm and propelled her firmly toward the door. "Bedtime," he said—they had completely forgotten the dinner hour, and others had forborne to remind them. "Mademoiselle ought to be looking for you. When you are a year older to the day, I shall buy you the ring I promised."

"Oh, Nacio, really?" she lifted her face like a child for his goodnight kiss. "What sort of ring is it going to be?"

"That," he replied—and his matter-of-fact voice shook with the control he put upon it—"will be for you to decide when the time comes, my Mary-flower."

DUGAN TE DEON KARRIA OROC ALGARRAGUI*

* Meaning "Let us now sing a Te Deum with thankfulness."
This is the traditional last phrase of a Basque epilogue, or
Askenpheridikia—

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